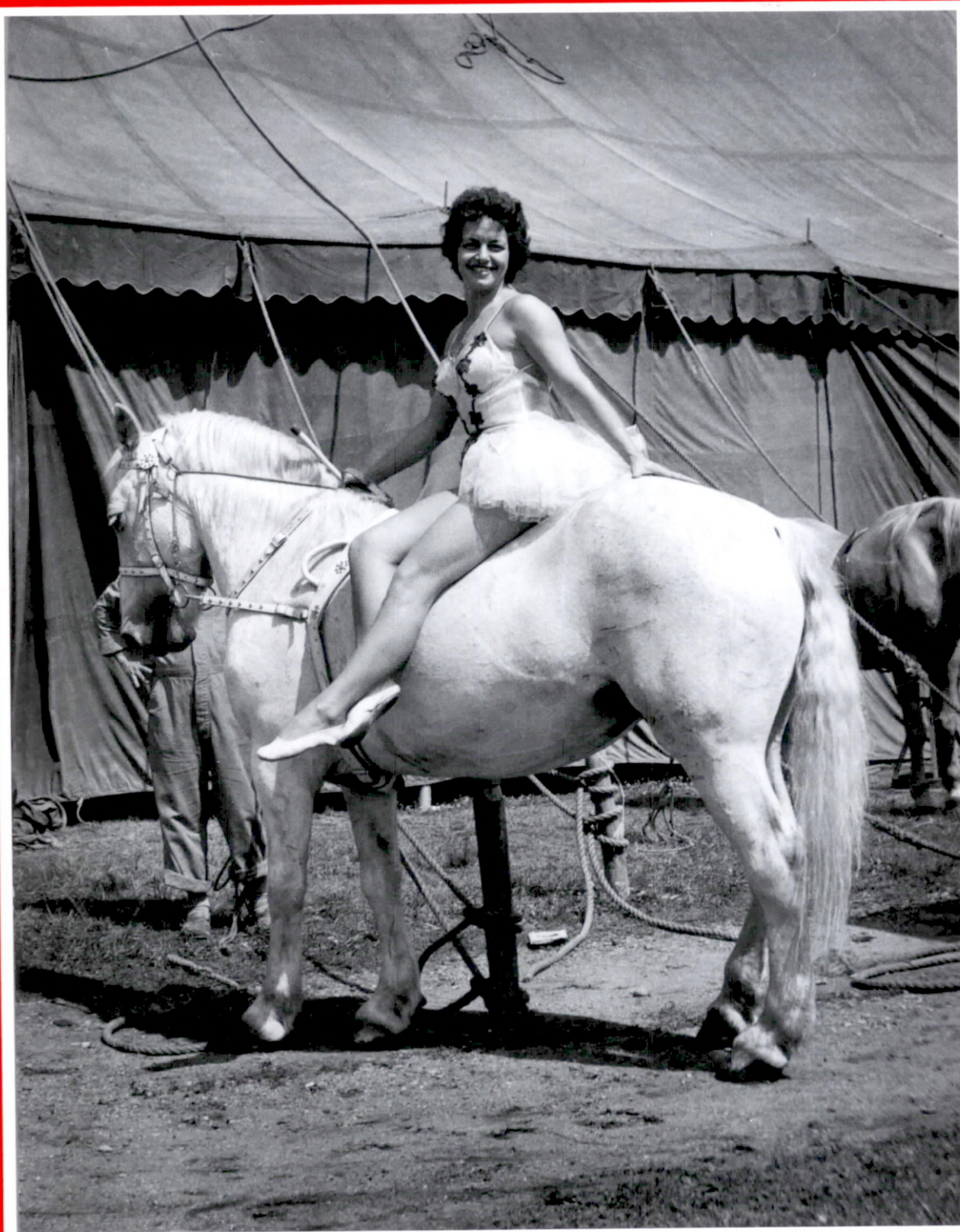


BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1997



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Vol. 41, No. 1

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

Twelve year old "Little Norma Davenport" was featured in a 1944 Dailey Bros. Circus lithograph picturing an elephant act.

In 1961, by then Norma Davenport Cristiani, she appeared in a riding act on her husband Pete's Cristiani-Wallace Bros. Circus. Today she works as a circus marketing executive in Sarasota, Florida.

The cover photo was taken in 1961 by Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

REGARDING DUES NOTICES

Dave Price, CHS Treasurer, asks that you wait until you receive your 1997 dues notice before sending your check. Please do not make payment until you are billed.

BEQUEST RECEIVED

The Circus Historical Society has received a total distribution of \$88,664.85 from the estate of Edith "Shrimp" Johntson.

Mrs. Johntson, a CHS member, died on June 19, 1995. Her will directed that her farm near Sheldon, Illinois be sold with the proceeds to be divided among a number of organizations including the CHS, the CFA and the Circus World Museum.

The Johntson funds have been in-

vested separately from other CHS money and will be used for future needs.

1997 CHS CONVENTION

Another exciting program of events focusing on the history of the circus is being planned for 1997 CHS convention registrants. Highlighting the schedule will be special guest speaker Bill Griffith, former owner of the motorized Adams Bros., Sells Bros. and Birnam Bros. circuses. Bill's stories about circus life are legendary.

The heart of the convention will be the slate of papers and exhibitions presented by CHS members and guest speakers. Fred D. Pfening III will survey Chicago's position in circus history. Gordon Yadon will draw a bead on Chicagoan "Bunk" Allen's nefarious character. The first baby elephant birth in America, predating the 1880 arrival of Columbia, will be the focus of Richard J. Reynolds' important paper. William L. Slout will discuss P. T. Barnum's Great Roman Hippodrome and Steve Gossard will speak about Petersburg, Illinois circus history in his inimitable style. Other highly regarded presenters will include Sarah Blackstone, John McConnell, Margaret Shannon, Stuart Thayer and Al Stencell, who promises more riotous tales of Canadian circus. There will be a spe-

cial showing of great circus posters from the Ken Harck collection and a discussion of poster conservation and preservation. The convention will close on Saturday with a special visit to Jasper and Marion Sanfilippo's truly spectacular Victorian Palace. The largest private home in Illinois, it is internationally famous for housing the world's largest collection of mechanical music instruments and the world's largest theatre organ.

Ask past convention registrants about the CHS programs and you, too, will want to take advantage of this enjoyable and educational opportunity. The registration form is included in this issue for your use. Registration is open to non-CHS members.

Convention headquarters will be the Sheraton North Shore, a newly remodeled facility in one of Chicago's finest suburbs. Registrants should make their own reservations by calling 847-498-6500 or 1-800-535-9131. Mention the CHS room block to obtain the reduced rate of \$82.00 for a single or double. The hotel is located at 933 Skokie Boulevard, Northbrook, and is accessible from Interstate I-94. Limousine service is available for \$10.00 from O'Hare International Airport. Ask when confirming your reservation.

Convention attendees can register the afternoon of June 4 and the morning of June 5. The formal program commences June 5 at 10:00 AM and will conclude the evening of June 7. The original convention plans included a visit to the Big Apple Circus. Its Chicago dates changed to the week following. We regret any inconvenience this may cause for CHS registrants.

NEW MEMBERS

✓ Bob Judge 508 Lakewood Rd. Neptune, NJ 07753	4069
✓ George Feldbauer 27 Hamilton Ave. Cranford, NJ 07016	4070
✓ Jan Gregor P. O. Box 85781 Seattle, WA 98145-1781	4071
✓ Gary Thomas 9819 North Solon Rd. Richmond, IL 60071	4072
✓ Yoram S. Carmeli PhD Dept. of Sociology/Anthropology University of Haifa Haifa, Israel 31905	4073
✓ Albert W. Bode, II 3409 Persimmon Creek Dr. Edmond, OK 73013	4074

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1966-Jan.-Feb.
1967-July-Aug., Nov.-Dec.
1968-All but Jan.-Feb.
1969-July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.
1970-All but July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.
1971-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.
1972-All available.
1973-All but Nov.-Dec.
1974-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.
1975-All available.
1976-All but Jan.-Feb., Nov.-Dec.
1977-All but Mar.-Ap.
1978-All available.
1979-All but Jan.-Feb.
1980-1986-All available.
1987-All but Nov.-Dec.
1988-1996-All available.

Price is \$3.50 each. Add \$2.00 postage for one issue, \$5.00 for more than one issue. Please select substitutes in case we are out of any of above.

BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES
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COLUMBUS, OH 43221

BY POPULAR DEMAND

Clyde Beatty-Cole. Bros. Circus

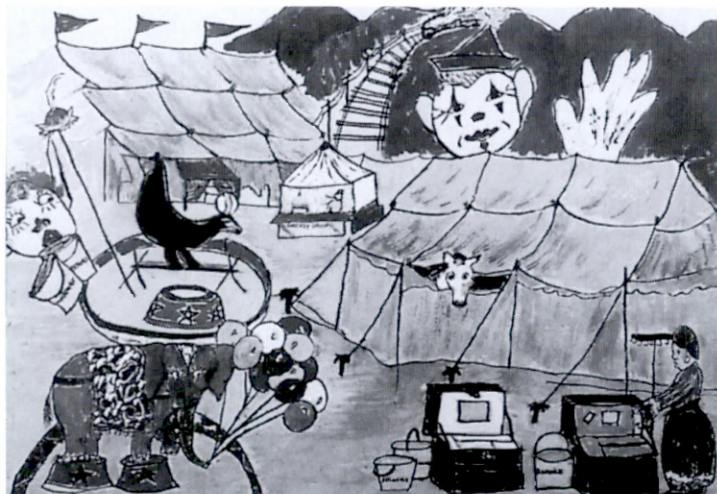
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**COLLECTORS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD WILL WANT TO
HAVE THEIR VERY OWN SET OF ALL OCCASION CIRCUS CARDS.**
(Includes one type of drawing)



The card has quite a background. My grandmother drew this picture back in 1928 while in the circus. It is called Impressions of the Circus because she was 12 at the time. She and her two sisters were called the De-long Sisters. They were an acrobatic team (Iron Jaw, tumbling, and one of the few sister acts doing the three high). They started in the business in 1922 because one sister needed to build up her muscles so they all three started doing tumbling at PTA meetings. They went on to perform with Gentry Bros., Walter L. Main, Show Boat, and finally Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

They worked with many performers like: Bob Hope, Phil Harris, Bob Crosby, Lillian Leitzel, Alfredo Codona, and Con Colleno to name just a few. They performed by request for Hitler in 1937 for his Birthday. They finally left the business in 1938, however, she is still asked to do speaking engagements at the age of 84.

Send inquiries to: Kathleen Bolinger
1729 Greentree Blvd. Apt. 33 Clarksville, IN 47129

Single Cards \$2.00 Box of 8 cards \$10.00 (includes story above in each card)
Please allow 3-4 weeks for delivery. (sorry no C.O.D.'s). Make checks payable to Kathleen Bolinger

This paper was presented at the CHS convention in Baraboo, Wisconsin on July 17, 1996. It has been augmented for publication.

An old showman once told me that there was no other business that you could frame with very little money that could make you as much money as a circus. Then he looked away off in the distance past me and said "If it clicked."

I felt that if you started a business with nothing or very little and you did any kind of money at all it would be a success. I also knew that the key to any good circus operation was the front end. As the old showmen say: you can have the best circus in the world but if you have no place to go with it--you got nothing. With many of these things on my mind I started to frame and book a circus I called Royal Bros. in the fall of 1972 to tour in the spring of 1973. The previous two winters I had toured a stage variety show using phone promotions with three promoters. However, my education in outdoor show business started back when I was finishing public school.

I started working on circuses in my summer holidays while in high school. I first spent a summer on Green Amusements, a medium size carnival based in Toronto, Ontario that not only played my home town fair in Perth, Ontario but spent the summers in Quebec before returning to Ontario to play a string of first class fairs. I worked in the floss and ice cream trailer and got \$5.00 extra on tear downs helping the electrician. This worked out well as Danny the electrician also drove the ice cream semi where I slept. Danny was a lush. Heidi, the owner's wife and operator of the floss wagon, paid me \$5.00 extra a week to make sure Danny didn't stop at any taverns enroute to the next spot. Danny paid me \$5.00 not to tell her when we

FRAMING A CIRCUS FROM SCRATCH WITH NO SCRATCH

By Al Stencell

stopped. Seven weeks after this arrangement Danny drank too much and drove the floss semi into a side walk cafe during a Sunday jump that took us through the center of Quebec City. Heidi was mad at me and quit paying me the \$5.00 but I didn't tell Danny that.

The next summer I found a job as the electrician on Bill and Dick Garden's Gene Cody and Kipling Bros. Circus. The first day there the tent blew down. The third day the elephant was going into the tent on tear down and the hook on her work harness snagged the main big top electrical cable and pulled it out of the switch box while I was up in the light plant and I thought I was in the middle of a fire works display. Two weeks later the tax man told me that he was leaving the show as the tax he was collecting off the ticket sales for the province wasn't covering his road expenses and the next day the hydro inspector told me that he couldn't figure out why the light plant hadn't blown up--there was hardly a wet mark on the oil dip stick.

That night while everyone was up town eating I grabbed my suitcase and left the lot with the light plant chugging black smoke and all the tear-down

The Garden brother's Gene Cody and Kipling Bros. Circus in Travistock, Ontario in 1965. All illustrations are from the author's collection.

lights blazing. Bill and Dick thought I had been kidnapped. A few days later and I was a butcher on Sells and Gray for Dick McLaughlin. I was given the outside hot dogs and soda. That night the butcher-band-side show sleeper came off the fifth wheel in the middle of the town's business section. First it teetered to one side, then the other as I went from top bunk to middle bunk on the far wall to floor bunk on my side. This stopped

suddenly when we hit a parked car. Someone managed to open the rear door and we all staggered out in underwear and assorted night wear. The butchers were okay but the drummer in the band had been standing up peeing in a whiskey bottle when the truck rolled on its side and was now running up and down the street holding his bloody penis that was shooting blood in two or three directions. That night the best show wasn't on the lot.

Right away I could see this was a special business and I wanted to be part of it. I spent the next five years working on circuses and asking a lot of questions. In 1965 I was deported from the United States while working on Sells and Gray. It was now clear if I was to work in the circus business I would have to have my own show. Bill English had sold his third interest in Sells and Gray and formed the Hanneford Circus to play ice rinks in Canada and so he hired me first as billposter and then as twenty four hour man. The route opened early and closed by end of June. In 1968 he also put out a large magic show for arenas that closed in Thompson, Manitoba. Dory Miller was running Carson and Barnes that year as Jack Moore had died and Bill English was running the phone promotions for them to keep his Hanneford promoters busy until he needed them on his own dates. He told me Dory was real short of help and the guy who had the inside stand was in jail and he needed a stand man. Would I go over there? Sure. I drove from Thompson, Manitoba to Baraboo, Wisconsin and stored my car, an old ex-army station wagon, at the museum. Dick McLaughlin was managing the concessions there and the first person I saw on the grounds was Never Worry Murray. Murray was sipping on a Coke with a dozen or more aspirins in it. It was like old home week on the Sells and Gray butcher department. I stored my station wagon down behind



the railway barn and I went to Carson and Barnes in Waukegan, Illinois. Dory had a stiff working the joint and he said to give him a day while he ran the guy. I joined two days later in Wisconsin and had the inside stand which went in the menagerie.

There was no one to put up the menagerie so I was paid \$60 a week to up and down the menagerie. Most days we were so short of help that everyone was needed just to get the top up and so most days the inside stand went in the big top and there was no menagerie. Some days the menagerie got up, but there was not enough time to put the cat cages in and the only thing in there was the bull line and my stand. The business was terrific and I had five or six people working for me on the stand. When we got into Minnesota Bob Raborn, who first had the stand, returned; we agreed to split the stand and we had some great weeks. A guy came on the show talking about starting a little show and he talked me into leaving with a bundle of side wall. That and my bank roll were the nucleus of the show. We played two and three day festivals and street fairs in South Dakota and in three weeks the side wall was all torn up and my bank roll gone. In desperation we booked the homemade floss trailer into the Sioux Falls fair on the independent midway and starved further.

When I got a break I went into the commercial building and watched a well endowed lady pitch eye glass tighteners. She was doing well as almost every farmer wore beat up wobbly glasses. My only remaining possession was a portable typewriter and I managed to talk her into giving me two gross of eye tighteners for it. I went down to the bus depot and pitched them until I had enough money to get to the next big city enroute to Baraboo. In a week I got to my car and started home pitching the eye tighteners in truck stops. When I left a truck stop those truckers had better rubber on their glasses than their rigs.

I got home and pitched them all fall at fairs. In 1972 Bill English gave me the garbage and rubber concession on Hanneford and I came home with a small bank roll. I had gotten married in the fall of 1971 and my wife Shirley had stayed working



The Sells & Gray side show banner semi where the butchers slept.

as a physiotherapist. She got two weeks holidays in August and we drove to New England to camp. We were near Bennington, Vermont when I saw paper for King Bros. so we camped there and we went in the next day and saw the show. I told someone who I knew on the show that I was thinking of framing a circus in Canada and he introduced me to Johnny Frazier who wanted to frame another show. I mention the words "another show" as nobody on King Bros. had told me that Johnny had left more of his show parked behind gas stations or broken beside the road than there were South of the Border billboards. We talked and shook hands and that was it.

After returning home, I cobbled together some stationary by rehashing a letterhead design used by Bob Earl. I laid out a one sheet booking brochure. The pitch to potential stated: "Here's our deal. Royal Bros. Circus provides at no cost to sponsor.

"1. Entire and complete circus for two 90 minute performances. (Extra shows given when ticket sales warrant)

Al and Shirley Stencell in 1973 when they went into the circus business.



"2. Public liability insurance covering the sponsor and the owner of the circus grounds.

"3. Its own electrical power. No city hydro required.

"4. All advertising posters and newspaper advertisements and staff to place same.

"5. Supply of adult and child tickets for sponsor's own advance sale.

Sponsor provides at no cost to circus:

"1. Suitable show grounds, approximately 250 feet by 150 feet.

"2. All necessary licences.

"3. Source of adequate water supply.

"4. Any fire or police protection required by local law.

"5. Placement and removal of receptacles for garbage. Circus will clean grounds and place garbage in provided containers before leaving town.

"How our sponsors profit:

"1. Our sponsor shares in every ticket that is sold for our main circus performance in the big top from the very first dollar.

"2. Sponsor's share of advance sale from 20 to 50%.

"3. Sponsor's share of circus day sale from 10 to 15%.

"Admission prices: advance sale adult \$1.25, child \$1. Show day adult \$1.50 and child \$1.25.

"Our reasonable family admission prices insure a high volume of sales and a proven money maker.

"Our representatives will be in your area soon. He will be glad to meet with your organization without any obligation on your part."

I then started booking. At this point I had about \$3,500. While on Hanneford I became good friends with the Earls. Bob had gone bust with his Roberts Bros. a few years previously and was working to save money to go back out. He had the food concessions and before opening his son Bob was working

on a floss machine when a piece of metal went into his eye and he lost it. He couldn't drive at night and Bob Senior was dead tired so they were having a rough time. They said I could sleep on the sofa in their trailer if I would drive them over the jumps. We had some long jumps and I talked constantly to Bob about his operation of Roberts Bros. and would he sell me his equipment. Bob usually said, "Well, let me get some sleep and we will talk about it tommrow." While winding around the Kentucky hills in a heavy

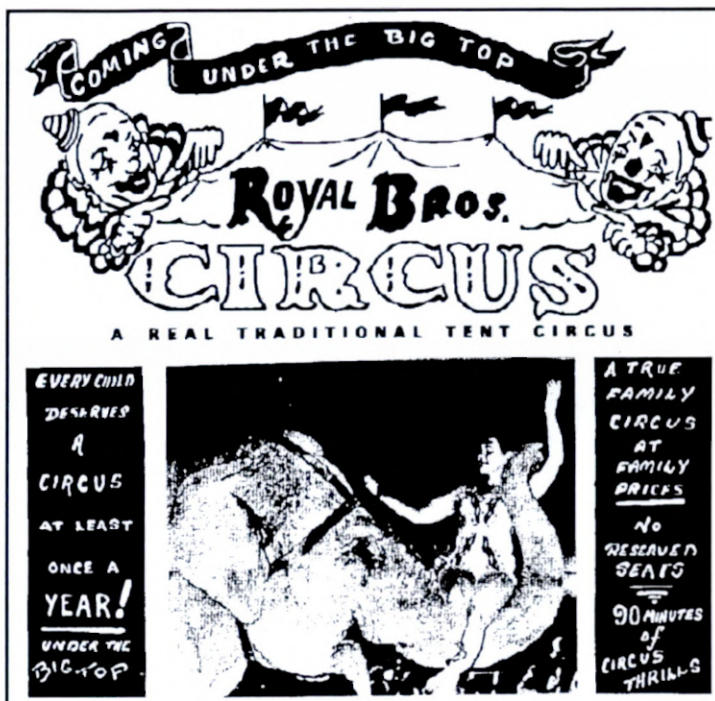
rain storm during one long jump Bob finally said he would sell me his seats, ring curb and lights if I would just shut up and let him fall asleep.

Shirley took two weeks holiday in February and this was our chance to go to Florida and get Bob's stuff for \$700. Included in the deal were: 15 lengths of seats, seven high consisting of 31 stringers, 62 jacks, and 105 seat boards; two 26 foot ring curbs; 2 swinging ladders; two ticket boxes; exit lights; one lot of 7 foot side poles; miscellaneous pieces of side wall; and a lot of miscellaneous ropes, blocks and rigging.

I was also dickering with Hoxie Tucker for his old top, a 60 with three-30s. He finally agreed to sell it for \$1,000. My next move was to go out and buy a used truck to pick up all this stuff. A week before we left for Florida. I bought a 1967 Ford tilt cab with a eighteen foot steel box and told them I would be back on Friday to pick it up. I believe I paid \$1,500 for it. On Friday Shirley and I packed a bunch of sandwiches and a suitcase and took a cab out to the truck dealership.

We got the truck and headed for Florida. Within an hour on the highway it was dark and I pulled on the light switch. No lights—not one anywhere. We pulled into Woodstock, Ontario and spent three hours in garage while a mechanic tried to find out why the lights were out. He finally concluded it was a short somewhere in the metal box and he would need tomorrow to find it. We decided to keep going with out lights. We got up at dawn and drove until dust. The next day we made it to just outside Dayton, Ohio.

The next morning we were heading back onto 1-75 when there was a loud bang and the whole inside of the cab was doused with steam and hot water. I managed to get to the side of the road and stopped before we bailed out to watch our mobile geyser. This was Sunday morning but luckily a guy came along and looked at it. He said the radiator hose was rotten and had burst. He drove me into an auto parts place in Dayton that he knew opened for a few hours on Sunday mornings. In a few hours we were back on the road. Everything clicked along fine until outside Valdosta, Georgia. The truck was sputtering and back firing and finally stopped in the middle of



The front page of the Royal Bros. booking brochure used in 1973.

town. Again we were lucky as an old black guy looked at the engine and said we needed points and took to us a parts store where we got the points and he helped us put them on and we were off.

After a week of dawn to dusk driving we arrived in Bob and Doris Earl's front yard. We rested a day and then loaded all the seats, curb, etc. and headed for the Miami airport to Hoxie's quarters. We got in there around supper time. He had a large faded orange top up. The cat act and bulls were in one end and they were using the other end as a work shop. I paid Hoxie the cash for the top and he told me to back the truck up to this pile of old canvas. I opened the back door and his eyes popped. He pushed back his straw hat and said: "Boy, you ain't shittin'. You got half a circus in there." We spread one section of the top then re-rolled it and loaded the other four bundles. Hoxie asked what I was going to use for side wall and I said I didn't know. I didn't have anymore money. He said, "Well, back that truck over by that spool truck." I did so and he started throwing bundles of side wall into the back of my truck. "There you go son, that should cover most of that small top, good luck." We shook hands and headed back home. Everything went fine until the Florida-Georgia border when I blew by the scale and the patrol chased me and pulled me over. I dumfied up and after making sure I had no fruit in the back he let me go with a

warning to stop at all scales. I didn't tell him that I was a showman and the word SCALE was not in my vocabulary. Outside Washington we had a small fire outside the engine. The wiring harness was burnt off, but again a fellow road warrior took me into an auto parts store and helped me get new spark plugs and the right new wiring harness. Off we went for Doc Boas' winter quarters in Pennsylvania for a marquee. The truck was way over loaded and we rolled back down many Pennsylvania hills. One bad hill in particular took us right back through a little town with people jumping out of the way until we got it stopped without hitting anything. By the time we got to Doc's quarters Shirley was seriously wondering

about this circus business. Doc and his wife gave us hot baths and a good meal. I gave Doc \$75 for a 20 x 20 marquee. He threw in some more side wall and a dozen heavy band coats from some defunct marching band. Later in the summer the working guys hated wearing these jackets in their prop and ticket taking as they were heavy and hot. Another two days and we were home in Toronto. I took the truck back to where I bought it and I was pleasantly surprised when they not only paid all the bills I had accumulated but went over the truck and got all the lights running. We stored the truck in Keswick, Ontario on a farm that was a half way house for ex-prisoners.

A few weeks later Bob Earl called to see how we made out getting home. He offered us his old house trailer real cheap, around \$400. He had to come up to his relatives in Rye, New York and if we paid the gas he would bring it up to Toronto. It was parked on the farm too.

Shirley's Mom knew this couple, Katie and Harold King, who ran this half way house for criminals. On Sundays she went over and looked after things in the kitchen so the Kings got a break. Harold was an ex-carny jam auctioneer and very Jewish. My mother-in-law told him I was framing a circus. He suggested doing it on the farm as a work project for the cons. As soon as the snow melted we were up at the farm each week end putting the thing together, building and painting. Harold promoted the paint and manpower.



The Ford tilt cab truck used to carry the big top in 1973.

Companies donated shoes and clothes to the farm and what they didn't use Harold traded for everything else they needed. He did the same for us.

During the week I booked the show and made three to seven service club lunches and dinners each week to sell the show. The route was all in Ontario and most of it within a 200 mile radius of Toronto. The first year I booked very little of it by mail as I had no references as a circus owner. A month before we opened I sent for a black kid named Junior who had been a terrific butcher and worker for me on Hanneford. He would have the garbage joint on P.C. if he helped in quarters.

Within a week or so Johnny Frazier arrived with a big old beat up house trailer, an old straight truck off Clark and Walters full of side show platform jacks and stages, and miscellaneous electrical cable. He also brought floss, popcorn and snow machines along with an old blue semi pulled by a 1949 White tractor that hauled Babe the elephant which we had leased from Dory Miller and four or five ponies and a pony sweep that John had picked up along the way. The old blue bull semi caught fire in the middle of a jump. Johnny had been welding on it the night before and some of the welding sparks must have smoldered up in the floor boards and the wind from the road speed fanned the sparks into flames. A rural fire department came out and put the fire out. The ponies and Babe were unloaded safely before the fire spread. After the fire was out we found wads of semi burnt Tony Diano Circus tickets that were wedged into the walls of the semi-trailer.

We found a guy who was cutting fence posts in his bush and made a deal for him to cut us trees that we would use for tent poles. We explained that we wanted trees around 5 or 6 inches in diameter and about 35 feet long. We went back a few days later to see a pile of trees the size of telephone poles. The guy was Italian and just couldn't understand why we wanted these smaller trees. We made a deal where Junior and Bob Rayborn would be allowed to go into the guy's bush and pick out and cut the trees we wanted. This worked out great and we soon had enough cut for all the centers, quarters, and side poles for the big top, marquee, and an old green 20 x 60 top that John brought up as a side show top. We also cut ten poles for a bannerline. We had no ban-

Al Stencell with Babe the elephant, leased from D. R. Miller.



The Stencells' house trailer and ticket wagon.

ners but made a chain bannerline anyway.

The only truck we had that could halfway carry the long trees we had cut was the bull semi. We drove it up and opened the back doors and shoved the trees in as far as they would go. Even then they stuck out 10 or 15 feet. We finished loading the poles and went back into the bush to find the Italian and pay him. We couldn't find him. So we went back to the truck, got in and backed up to leave. Crash! We both leaped out of the truck and there behind us was a tree sticking in the headlight and half out the front fender of the Italian's new Cadillac. He must of arrived behind us, parked behind the truck and gone in the bush looking for us. We barely looked at the damage when we heard him coming out of the bush fifty yards from our truck. We quickly pushed his car back off the tree. I spread myself in front of his light and fender and Johnny went up to him waving the money we owed him. I stayed on the fender until Johnny had talked him into the car. We waved as he drove off and then got the hell out of there.

Every day until we left quarters a week later we looked for him to drive up with a beef over the light and bashed-in fender, but we never saw him again.

Things were coming along fine and we spent a lot of time out at junk yards looking for gear heads for stakes and drive shafts that we cut into two inch widths and used them for pole bands. Concrete reinforcing rods became pole pins on the big poles.

A ticket window was cut in the back of our house trailer and the

bedroom became the show's office. We slept in the front in a fold out sofa. I lettered the sides Royal Bros. Circus and painted scroll around the window. Each day we had five to seven ex-cons helping us paint seats and debark, cut and pin the various poles. We even sent one guy out booking until he fell off the wagon and drove my station wagon into a church.

By the time we opened the first week in May I had about fourteen weeks booked. Two weeks before opening the billposter was sent out and we were soon on our way. We opened in Sutton, Ontario on May 7, 1973. We had no working men--none. Five of us put it up and tore it down: myself, Johnny Frazier, Bob Raborn, Dick Forest, and Junior. After about three weeks we finally hired two working guys and that day we let them set it up and by the next day they had quit.

When we opened on May 14 the show was moving on these trucks:

1. 1967 Ford tilt cab with 16 foot steel box, carried seats, ring curbs, concession equipment and canvas.
2. 1949 White tractor with semi trailer carrying elephant, ponies and other equiment.
3. Two wheel rented trailer with a 25 kw light plant.
4. John Frazier's Wells Cargo novelty trailer.
5. One ton truck framed as a snake show that pulled Frazier's house trailer.
6. Station wagon that pulled the light plant.
7. My station wagon that pulled my house trailer fitted out with a ticket window in back.
9. Jimmy Kernan's pick-up truck that pulled the novelty trailer.

That was the equipment we started out with. About six weeks later we bought a home-made two axle house trailer frame which was fitted up with racks to hold all the seats, the poles, and the canvas.

We struggled along until end of June



Johnny and Corkie Fraizer in their comedy whip act.

when school got out and we finally got a half dozen or so high school kids for working men. One of them, Eddie Malcolm, spent 18 seasons with me. When we opened the ticket window in Sutton that day the lineup went back from the wagon and out the fairgrounds gate and three blocks back towards downtown. We soon found out Bob Earl's five high seats were too small. About the third week out Johnny built new eight high stringers. We bought an old dual axle house trailer frame and put racks on it to hold the poles and seats. Up until that time we had been carrying them in the Ford tilt cab with the ends sticking out ten feet or more.

The July 7, 1973 *Amusement Business* contained this write up of our circus: "A new tent circus, Royal Bros. debuted in Canada May 14 and reports

Royal Bros. Circus on the lot in Rodney, Ontario in 1973.

exceptionally good business to date on its 16 week season.

"The show is owned by A. W. Stencell and John Frazier. Stencell, a 26 year-old Canadian, has 15 years experience in the circus and carnival business, including some time with the Hanneford Circus. Frazier is a long-time performer and concessionaire from Hugo, Oklahoma.

"Most people that come around the show can't believe the business," Stencell told AB. "Our route is pretty fresh and these people haven't had a tent show in a decade."

"Stencell reports capacity with standing room only at 20 consecutive performances. Best days to date were Streetsville and Essex, Ontario. Both towns gave Royal Bros. three straw houses.

"The show's big top is a 60 foot round with two 30 foot middle sections. Seating capacity is 900 with the performance presented in two rings. A 30 by 75 foot round top is used for the side show and marquee is 15 by 15 feet.

"The main show performance runs an hour and a half with music provided by drummer Dave Knoderer and his sister Paula on their new calliope. Knoderer also announces the big show.

"The side show features Knoderer on bagpipes; Paula Knoderer, Punch and Judy; Dennis Michaels, magic; and John Frazier, fire eating. Animals displayed in the side show include the show's elephant, llama, seven ponies, two java monkeys and a civet cat. Frazier and Knoderer share management duties and openings.

"Program: 1-Noel's dog and pony revue; 2-clowns; 3-Miss Toni, aerial ladder; 4-Lang Family, acrobatic; 5-clowns; 6-Jumping Jacks, trampoline; 7-Michael's Mess of Mutts; 8-clowns; 9-Elephant Big Babe, presented by John Frazier; 10-clowns; 11-Sheriff of Wichita, bull whips; 12-Bob Lang, stilt juggling; 13-clowns; 14-Miss Toni, aerial perch; 15-Lang's Chimpy; 16-





Mitchell's dog act with Lynn Mitchell and daughters Bo and Brandy.

Juggling Michaels; 17-Prof. Fred, plate spinning; 18-Brahma Bull worked by Frank Noel.

"Staff: Al Stencell, general agent and manager; John Frazier, general superintendent and manager; Hazel Frazier, concessions; Shirley Stencell, office manager and mail agent; Bob Raborn, boss canvasman and No 1 concession stand; Richard Forest, side show canvas and No. 2 concession stand; Jimmy Keenan, novelties; Dave Knoderer, banner salesman and announcer; and Gary Noel, producing clown.

"Advance: William Inman, contracting agent; David Allen, press and bill posting."

The staff listed in the July 7, 1973 *Amusement Business* article was about right. William Inman listed as contracting agent was the ex-con who fell off the wagon and drove my station wagon into the side of a church in Hamilton, Ontario. He only booked about four towns. The rest of the towns were booked by me.

Like the article says, right from the start we were doing turn away busi-

ness, about five hundred from the night show and they were so mad they started rocking the office trailer from side to side. This wouldn't have been too bad if Shirley and myself hadn't been in it. We came close to fights with towners but that would have to wait for another couple of years. The monkeys and the cevet cat were not on the show to start. I believe Corky Frazier smuggled the two monkeys in when he joined the show mid-season. The cevet cat I bought from Bob Chase in Miami and was flown up. I bought most of my snakes from Mr. Chase. He was very reliable and his animals were in good shape and shipped properly and on time. I probably bought about ten snakes from him. I am sure the snakes for the snake show came from him as well and probably came at the same time as the cevet.

The performance was okay for a high grass show and better than many today. Frank Noel presented a very nice single pony and dog act with a riding dog and the bridge. Then came two swinging ladder numbers with Toni Frazier, Virginia Raborn or Tinkerbelle Frazier. We bought a loop-to-loop rigging and the only person who that had enough nerve to do it was Tinkerbelle Frazier (She married Willy Waltens. I cannot recall her real name--she was Corky's daughter). The Langs did a teeterboard-acrobatic act. Cary Noel did clowning. The Michaels-Lynn and the two girls--presented a dog act. John Frazier or Dick Forest walked Babe the elephant around and had her salute in the ring. Frank Noel as the Sheriff of Wichita did a whip cracking act with his wife. Bob Lang did a juggling act on stilts. Mr. and Mrs. Irv Lang presented two chimps. Dennis and Lynn Michael did a juggling act. Dennis also did plate spinning. Dennis and Lynn did a tooth ache gag, with her as a nurse and him as a rube coming out of the audience.

The show closed with Frank Noel and his Brahma bull doing a fire fence jump on the track in front of the long side seats. Dave Knoderer played drums and his sister the calliope. The calliope was new and mounted in a new Wells Cargo trailer. It looked very nice.

We did very well in northern Ontario as that route was very fresh. I had shown Little Current on Manitoulin Island with Gene Cody and Kipling Bros. in 1965 and I remembered we had to show in the arena after spending most of the day trying to put stakes in at the ball park. There was about three or four inches of earth and then solid rock everywhere. Bill Garden hired a compressor and a guy spent several hours drilling holes but the stakes pulled right out.

It was now getting late in the day so



Paula Knoderer in front of her brother's air calliope.

they quickly made arrangements to use the indoor ice rink. We didn't do much business. It was also the last time I saw Howard Jones alive. He owned King Shows, a good size Ontario carnival. It played a very good spring route that opened in Sault St. Marie, and then Espanola and Sudbury and then back to Toronto. Tom Kennedy, the concession manager on Gene Cody, failed to buy extra apples when we were down south. I told him it would be hard to get apples in the north, especially in the spring. I had the apple joint, so I was very concerned. I got Tom to drive me over to Espanola and I told my problem to Howard and he gave me twelve bushels out of their concession truck! A few weeks later he died of a heart attack and there was no more pork pie hat



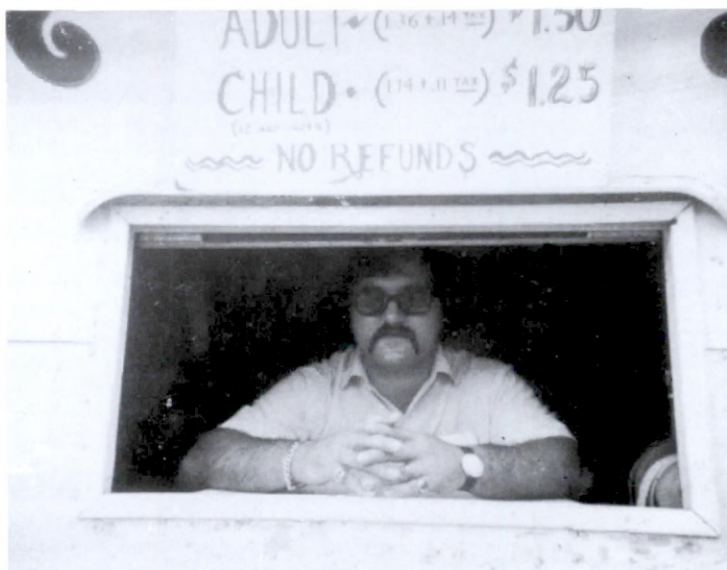
and cigar-clenched grinning face. He was one in a million. As a kid I came around the show and started bringing him fresh veggies from my parent's garden. He would give me ride tickets and let me hang out. One time I showed up and he had a 1938 Ringling program for me. That was the first circus program I had seen. Anyway when I booked Little Current. I went there in person and booked a beach area beside the water. We were able to crowd the show onto this sand beach and get most of the stakes in for the side show marquee and the big show.

We went through one town in Ontario about twenty times. It was called Stouffville. The guy with the restaurant by the railway crossing downtown got to expect most of the show would stop there for breakfast about seven every morning.

The first three show days we had Johnny and me with aprons on selling tickets for the third show when Irv Lang came up and informed us that the consensus of the back yard was that they would have to be paid extra for a third performance. Johnny exploded and chased Irv into the back yard and told all of the performers if they didn't want to do a third show they could all leave. Nobody left and many days were three show days.

The Noels were really fine old-time show people. He was always afraid of people around the Brahma Bull. Yet we let him run the bull up and down the small track between the quarter poles and the ring curb—just a foot or so from the first row of seats. We were set up in Powassan, Ontario on a ball diamond. We had angled in the big top along side the back stop fence. Frank was late for his act so I ran around back of the tent to where he parked his pick-up camper which pulled a horse trailer with the bull in it. When I came around the end of the top near the ball back stop the bull had Frank on the ground and was tossing him into the back stop like it was a game of bounce the cowboy! I grabbed a side pole and chased the bull off him. He was just scratched and shaken up a bit. My problem was to keep a straight face—it was pretty funny seeing this bull tossing this guy into the fence, then pick him up and toss him again.

Babe was a quiet elephant but the only thing she could do was raise her trunk and bend one knee in salute. The only music on the show was pro-



Al Stencell in the ticket window of his house trailer in 1973.

vided by Dave Knoderer's calliope that his sister played. She knew one good tune, *Fiddler on the Roof*. The whole show, every act got *Fiddler on the Roof*. We bought her sheet music for *Auld Lang Syne*. She played it and we announced that Babe was the oldest elephant on any North American circus and that this was her farewell tour. We had a nice elephant blanket that Doc Boas gave me which we draped it on her for the second walk around the track. When Babe made it around we brought her into the center ring and she saluted as the announcer said "Babe bids you farewell as she is off to her new home at the Atlanta Zoo." Some of the crowd cried at each performance.

If it was hot with no sign of rain we left Babe chained out at night. One night she got loose and knocked down a quarter mile of fence around the race-track in a fairgrounds. Another time she up rooted about fifty cabbages in an old couple's garden. We ate coleslaw in the cookhouse for weeks. The worst thing she did was just after the new seat stringers were built. She got loose and either leaned on or sat on the back of the seat on the pole trailer, breaking about five feet off of each stringer. We went from eight high to five high over night.

We had very little money for printed material. The twenty-four hour man was using flattened snow cone cups for route arrows. Bill English had used Wallace Printing Co. in Guelph, Ontario for all his Canadian printing. I did business with the owner, Harry Marsh, when I worked for Bill. Harry gave me credit on the ticket printing which was

a big expense and a real life saver. Harry also found a local printer who would print our heralds on credit.

My first posters were printed in North Bay, Ontario by Price Signs. They had been printing window cards for carnivals and fairs. I talked them into taking on our account and they gave us 30 days credit with a small down payment to off-set their start-up art costs. I used two styles of window cards on stiff cardboard. The biller tacked them on telephone poles and walls as well as putting them in windows.

Harold King had arranged with the largest toy company in Toronto, Irwin Toys, to give us 60 days credit on all novelty stock for the garbage joint. Super Puff Popcorn Co. was another story. It was cash on the line with those guys. At first we drove in for stock on a daily basis until we finally got enough money saved to buy \$1,000 worth of stock. We had no stock truck so we carried it in the back of a pick-up truck and covered it with a tarp.

We had just bought this stock. Big Bob was driving the pick-up to the next town and he flicked his cigarette butt out the window and it went back into the stock and so we lost most of it in the fire that followed. It never did get easier.

Despite all the day to day problems of moving and running a new circus the business was terrific and we finished the sixteen week season with a very good profit. We stored the show in the horse barns at the Orono fairgrounds near Bowmanville, Ontario. Johnny and his family headed home to Hugo, Oklahoma and a well earned rest at Disneyland.

We closed the show in Millbrook, Ontario in early September. The show was wintered in two old horse barns on the Orono fairgrounds. That fall I formed Alwisten Co., Ltd. John Frazier formed Joatz Co. Ltd. The two corporations formed a partnership to operate Royal Bros. Circus.


Shirley and I bought a house in Campbellford, Ontario and I immediately started booking for the 1974 tour. We were now an established show and as a show owners with a little money I soon bought a diamond ring and ordered three color stationary. Campbellford was the home of our circus operation for the next eight seasons.

1974

In 1974 the show was greatly enlarged. The bigger tent and more seats that included a set that were said to have come from South America. They were made of Teak wood and very, very heavy.

I wanted to take the show east to Newfoundland so I laid out a route and started booking. Johnny made plans to enlarge the show and we bought the last tent that Kelly-Miller had used for sixteen weeks. It was a 90 with two 30s and one 40 middles. It was green with red and yellow trim on the lace lines, rig, and around the quarter poles. It was a lot bigger than the old 60 foot top so we had to acquire longer quarter poles. The side show top remained the same but we got a used a 30 x 30 marquee. John made three sets of new ring curb. The show opened on the fairgrounds in Orono on the first of May. It rained all day and the bottom fell out of the infield on tear down. John hadn't made mud shoes for the center poles which were heavy and they sunk about four feet into the ground. John got sick on tear down and went to bed. Bob Raborn and myself finally decided about 1:30 in the morning to untie all the guy lines and just pull the top over to one side on to the ground. We were lucky as no dam-

A 1974 Royal Bros. Circus route card.

OFFICIAL ROUTE			
No. 7 1974			
			
CANADA'S ONLY TENTED CIRCUS			
GENERAL OFFICE - P.O. BOX 1210 - CAMPBELLFORD - ONTARIO			
A.C. 705-651-1530			
12th week			
JULY 29	Stephensville, NPLD	120	
" 30	Deer Lake, NPLD	90	
" 31	Springdale, NPLD	69	
AUG. 1	Bagder, NPLD	42	
" 2	Windsor, NPLD	15	
" 3	Bishop Falls, NPLD	11	
" 4	" "		
13th week			
AUG. 5	Lewisport, NPLD	37	
" 6	Glovertown, NPLD	80	
" 7	Bonavista, NPLD	117	
" 8	Placentia, NPLD	164	
" 9	Wabana, NPLD	80	
" 10	Carbonar, NPLD	80	
" 11	OPEN		
Total Mileage		4,710	
NO MAIL TO SAT OR SUN TOWNS			



The personnel of the Royal show near the end of the 1973 season. Missing in the photo were Al and Shirley Stencell, Bob and Jane Lang and their children, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Noel and their son Gary, and billposter Dave Allen.

age was done to the top but it took us a couple of more hours before it was loaded. We bought the old Kelly Miller spool truck from Dory. Someone said it was Kelly-Miller's first spool truck. After the 1974 tour it was mounted on the Ford tilt cab and stayed there until I left it in Newfoundland near the end of the 1977 tour of Martin and Downs.

A bigger elephant semi was added for Lillie, who was leased from D. R. Miller. She did a nice act and also worked in harness. Corky Frazier brought a truck we used as a mechanic's truck. We also acquired a straight truck off Clark and Walters and an old two wheeled home-made trailer that carried seats that came from Herb Walters. We also picked up a large semi with three foot sides from a paint manufacturing company. It carried all the poles, more seats and the spool from K-M. We acquired an old pit show semi that was rumored to have been used by Dick McGlaughlin as a penguin pit show and an older tractor to pull it. This was used as a snake show. We also acquired a small single axle concession trailer that was used in the middle of the midway for snow cones and as a sleeper.

We leased a light plant and it was put in the 1967 Ford tilt cab. The home-made trailer that hauled the seats, poles, canvas became the side show trailer with a

couple of cages on it. Bobby Rawls was the side show manager and he made the openings and ate fire. He also painted a set of side show banners. We also used some ponies from the 1973 pony ride and bought some ponies. Bob Grubb spent all winter bringing us a six pony drill that never did get properly used. In the winter of 1974 we made a deal and paid a deposit for Tulsa, a big bull from Walt King. By spring Walt said that she had turned mean and he would not sell her to us but as a peace offering he gave us an Appaloosa named Diamond, a mule, and a llama called Lucky that were to do a mixed drill. The only one that worked out was Lucky and he did an act on my shows up until 1982 when he died during the winter.

In 1974 we hired Ralph Duke and he presented the elephant, worked a four pony drill he owned and his daughter worked a goat act. We also hired the Jenniers. Walter and Joanne presented the seal act and Ethel presented the leaping greyhounds.

Corky Frazier came on the show at the start and did a very good chair and step balancing act plus he and Johnny did a comedy whip act. John started out doing whips, ropes, and trampoline but after a few weeks it was too much but he kept doing his rope and whip act. Bobby Rawls did juggling, rola bola, and a low wire act. Corky also did the clowning and the Frazier children did a trampoline act with Virginia Raborn. Virginia also did web with Toni Frazier and they both did ladder. The band was an organ and guitar.

And the circus went on from there. Like the old showman said you can make a lot of money with a circus-if it clicks-and mine did.

This paper was presented at the 1996 Circus Historical Society convention in Baraboo, Wisconsin.

The reason for the double authorship of this article lies in the far-flung activities of the subject. Aya Mihara, Associate Professor at Ohtani Women's University in Japan, discovered Risley's Japanese career, while Stuart Thayer had applied himself for some time to his American appearances. Ms. Mihara is currently at work on a book which will more fully delineate Risley's life.

There are two circus acts that are named after real persons. The Jackley Drops, no longer performed, and the Risley Act, which is still occasionally seen in the ring. The former was introduced by the Jackley family, nineteenth century acrobats, the latter by one of the most active, well-traveled circus artists of all time.

Richard Risley Carlisle (professionally, Richard Risley) was born in Salem, New Jersey in 1814. An youthful interest in athletics apparently led him to the circus, one of the few outlets then available for athletic performing. Circus acrobats were the early nineteenth-century equivalent of today's professionals in sports. We know nothing of his youth, and find him on a circus bill only in 1841, when he was twenty-seven years old. Hannah Winter states, without providing a reference, that he joined a traveling circus which advertised him as "Professor Richard Risley, athlete and performer on the flute." We have not been able to verify this statement. If he served an apprenticeship to a performer he might have begun it at twenty, which is very old for such a relationship. From his later life we would guess that he must have simply taken up athletics, as another challenge in a busy, almost manic, career.

In 1841 he was with the third unit of June, Titus, Angevine & Co., a combination circus and menagerie. He appeared with two apprentices as the "Polish Brothers." This was an oft-used name for what later was called, and is today, a "brother act," an acrobatic ensemble in which the performers are not actually related, but use a single name. The reason for using "Polish" as a cognomen is not clear, but it appears over and over in circus rosters. The original "Polish Brothers"--Charles and William Brown--were still active, thus it may have been a designation of type. We find "Hungarian Brothers," "Swiss Brothers," and "French Brothers" in literature.

RICHARD RISLEY CARLISLE: MAN IN MOTION

By Aya Mihara and Stuart Thayer

Henry Rockwell, manager of the 1841 show, had a winter show in New York in 1841-42, and Risley and his group were on the bills. Pierre Couderc, the master chronicler of things acrobatic, and, incidentally, a Risley performer himself, wrote in the January-February 1965 *Bandwagon* that it was with this circus that what we call the Risley Act was introduced.

Foot juggling, of which the Risley was an off-shoot, was first seen in America in 1831. The man who introduced it was a native of Columbia named Marino Perez, almost always advertised as Sig. Perez. He lay on his back, and juggled a nine-foot long wooden beam, turning it, throwing it up, catching it, all with his feet. The turn was referred to as a "tranca" act, "tranca" being the Spanish word for crossbar. In that same program, at Castle Garden in New York, Perez lay on a horse's back as it circled the ring and juggled an eighteen-inch wooden ball. He was active in various American

Poster advertising Richard Risley. Ringling Museum of the Circus collection.



circuses through 1837. Between Perez and Risley we find two "tranca" acts in America. Harvey Whitlock (fl. 1835-1847) did one on Yale, Sands & Co. in 1838, and on one of James Raymond's shows in 1839. John P. Garvey (fl. 1832-1846) offered the act on J. W. Stocking's National Circus in 1839. If

Risley introduced his eponymic turn in November 1841, then we must assume he was performing it with Welch & Mann in 1842.

With his six-year-old apprentice John, Risley made a journey to the West Indies in early 1843 and was in Guadeloupe when an earthquake occurred. We only know this because their miraculous escape from danger was reported in the New York papers in April.

Risley and John appeared at the Park Theatre in New York in May 1843. It is here that we first find a description of their performance. In Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage* a reporter for the New York *Herald* is quoted as writing "The somerset, in which he alights upon his father's feet, is a brilliant performance, and we believe never before attempted in this city." Later in that same year Risley and the boy appeared in London. In George Speaight's *A History of the Circus*, (London, 1980) we read, "no description, however vivid, can convey a faint idea of the grace and eloquence of their hitherto unequalled performance . . . in which the son, flung from the upraised hands of his father, alights upon the feet in like manner upraised." In September they were described as the youth "standing on the feet of his father throws from thence a somersault and alights in the same position again."

The next step was for the apprentices, who as a type came to be called "Risley boys," to roll up in a ball and be juggled by the feet of the understander just as he would a wooden ball. This was even more spectacular, though it was physically demanding for the boys, who were constantly black and blue from the pummeling they received. In Europe the act was, and is, called "the Icarian."

Risley had three apprentices over his career, all of whom adopted his surname. The eldest, John (d. 1873), was with him for years. The others, Henry and Charles, we have not found after the master's death in 1874. John and Henry were with Risley in England and Hannah Winter implies that Henry was added to the group in that

country. The troupe travelled about Europe to great success, visiting Paris, Brussels, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Milan and Rome. They were everywhere received with much acclaim. The highlight of the tour may have been the performance before Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle. To the researcher, however, an event in London seems more important, as it throws light on the man's character. It is related in his obituary in the *New York Clipper* (6 June 1874). When he returned to London in 1846, Risley was accorded a dinner by a number of distinguished gentlemen. At its close he rose to state that he was the best shot, the toughest wrestler, the longest jumper, the best billiard player, and the farthest thrower of the hammer of any man in London. It was thought that the wine was talking, but an appointment was made for the following day "when it was found that Professor Risley meant business."

"He won the wager with the rifle, and after vanquishing his opponent, performed for the amusement of the guests some startling feats, such as throwing small articles in the air, and hitting them with a bullet. He defeated the wrestler, and in the jumping match made the longest standing jump to that time. He gave the hammer thrower ten feet odds, and then distanced him fifteen inches. At billiards, however he was defeated." If true, this is an amazing catalog, and may answer why he came so late to the exhibition business. He had spent his youth perfecting all these skills, possibly in one or another of the gymnasiums that had proliferated in the cities in the 1830's. That he was a consummate athlete cannot be doubted. In Russia in 1845 he entered and won a number of figure-skating contests and rifle matches.

Theophile Gautier (1811-1872), a critic of great note, described the Risley troupe in 1844, when they appeared in a ballet at the Theatre Port Saint Martin in Paris: "There appears a great devil of a genie, perfectly constructed, with magnificent pectorals, muscular arms, but without the enormities of professional strongmen; he is costumed exactly as his children, whom he throws at once some twenty-five feet in the air, as something of a warming-up or preparatory exercises. Then he lies on his back. . . ."

"There begins a series of *tours de force* the more incredible in that they betray not the least effort, nor the least fatigue, nor the least hesitation. The two adorable gamins, successively or together, climb to the assault of their father, who receives them on the

palms of his hands, the soles of his feet, launches them, returns them, throws them, passes them from right to left, holds them in the air, lets them go, picks them up with as much ease as an Indian juggler maneuvers his copper balls." (Translation by Marian Hannah Winter.)

Risley returned to America, much enriched, in 1847, appearing at the Broadway Theatre in New York, and at Rufus Welch's National Circus in Philadelphia, both in October. An advertisement referred to them as "The truly electrifying display of acrobatic excellence, by Professor Risley and his sons." He may have then ceased to perform for a while. At one time in our investigation we thought that he performed in Tasmania in 1847 and 1848, but that proved to be a local acrobat who had adopted the name John Risley. The real Risley took a panorama painting of the Mississippi by John R. Smith to London in 1849, and as well opened an American bar and bowling alley in Vauxhall Gardens. In February 1850 he was showing the panorama in Brussels, when he discovered the Rousset Sisters, a troupe of ballerinas. He arranged to have them tour the United States in 1851, which they did quite successfully; however, Risley was apparently done out of his profits in some manner. Also in 1851, he performed in midyear in a circus in London titled Welch, McCollum & Risley. This would be in partnership with Rufus Welch and Thomas McCollum. Welch dropped out of the firm, and Risley and McCollum's French and American Equestrian Troupe was still active as late as September 1851 in London, when Risley was presented with a medal at his benefit. They appeared in Dublin in 1852.

He decided to retire, and did so, to a farm near Chester, Pennsylvania, but was able to lead an idle life for only a short time. He was not yet forty years old. In 1854 he took Henry and another apprentice, Charles, and set to touring. Hannah Winter reports them as appearing in Hartford, Connecticut in that year. With them was a contortionist named Devani, who would remain with Risley for several seasons.

In 1855 Risley's Vatican and Circus made its debut in California. The use of the name "Vatican" has no connection we can be certain of. Aya Mihara believes it referred to a backdrop or other piece of scenery that was unusual enough to merit its own mention. She found playbills for Risley in San Francisco in June, and Michael Sporrer found him in Sacramento in July. They visited the mining country, with its wonderful camp names such as Rattlesnake and Negro Hill, and were back in

San Francisco in October. C. B. Miller was listed as manager of the troupe; Devani was with it, as were A. V. Cadwell and Dan Conover. Cadwell, a rider, and Conover, a contortionist, had been part of Cadwell's troupe earlier in the year, and their presence with Risley raises the question as to whether the latter had taken over Jones & Cadwell's Circus Co., as it was titled. The Coroni (sometimes Corroni) family of rope dancers were featured in Risley's advertising. The company performed in halls as often as under canvas, and in December were in a building in San Francisco.

In 1856 Risley used three titles, Excelsior Mammoth Circus; French Ballet Troupe and Vatican Circus; and Risley's Vatican & Circus. Henry and Charles were on the roster, as was Mons. Devani, Joe Long and his wife, and a rider named Miss Freeth. This was most likely Dave Long and his wife Cellina, who had been in California circuses since Rowe's first effort in 1849. In fact, in October 1856 the Longs were back with Rowe. Miss Freeth was possibly the daughter, perhaps the sister, of a West Coast showman of the 1870's. The circus visited Sacramento and Marysville and Nevada City and Auburn. The Cincinnati *Daily Commercial* of 27 November had them in Oregon.

In the next season, according to Michael Sporrer, Risley did not advertise in the newspapers, thus our knowledge of his whereabouts, and his roster, comes from editorial comments in the papers in the various towns he visited. He had a hall show in Sacramento, and one in San Francisco, and then took to the road. At Marysville, California on May 22 the paper called it "Miner's Circus & Risley's Vatican." They traveled as far north as Vancouver, Washington, and were in Portland, Oregon in October.

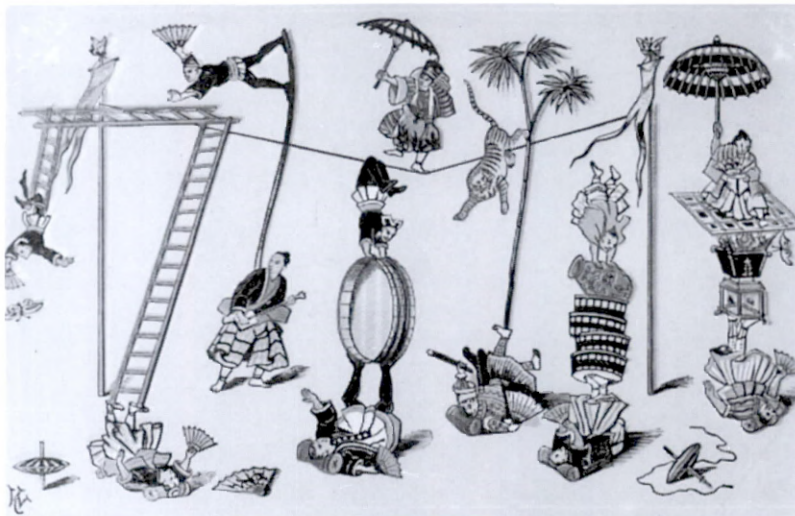
In the *New York Clipper* of 20 March 1858 it was noted that Risley and Devani were performing at the Royal Hawaiian Theatre in Honolulu. By September they were in Sydney, Australia. A Scotsman, John Reddie Black (1827-1880), wrote in his *Young Japan* in 1880 that he had met Risley in the Australian gold fields in 1858, and that he (Risley) was mining for gold without success. Since they were back in Sydney in May 1860, the presumption must be that they were on tour in the intervening time, though no proof of that has been found. The advertisements for their 1860 appearance there said Professor Risley and his son (Charles) would "illustrate the poetry of gymnastic science." Devani did his India rubber act, and two mu-

sical performers contributed as well. A year later, October 1861, they were in Singapore. By 1863 they were in Shanghai, China.

There are two marks by which Richard Risley can be measured as a contributor to the cultural history of his time. The first, of course, is his invention of the Risley act. The second is his introduction of the circus into Japan. Prior to Risley's arrival there was no organized field show in the western sense of arena, ring, equestrian acts, etc. There were performers aplenty and had been for years, but just as in the American scene prior to the advent of John Bill Ricketts, the Japanese artists appeared individually, in what might be termed booth shows. They had acrobats, jugglers, rope dancers and the like, many of them street artists just as in the west.

Risley landed in Yokohama, from Shanghai, on 6 March 1864. With him were ten performers and eight horses. The tent was erected on a vacant lot in the area where foreign residents were quartered. The first performance of an equestrian circus in Japan was presented on 28 March, and was attended by about 250 occidentals and 200 Japanese, according to a review in the English-language *Japan Herald*. The program included a pair of "Italian Brothers," acrobats; Miss Lizie Gordon, equestrienne; Mr. Eugene, dog act; La Petite Cerito, dancer; and a somersaulting rider, Mr. Rooney. Unfortunately for Risley he was unable to present his show anywhere in Japan but in the foreign quarter in Yokohama. The Japanese authorities were very much opposed to "alien invasion" in their country. As a result his audiences decreased as time went on, and he finally disbanded the troupe in May 1864.

Ever the entrepreneur, Risley then opened a livery stable, and offered gymnastic and riding lessons to the public. Later, he had an amphitheatre called "Royal Olympic Theatre," which was part-circus, part-variety in its offerings. He turned this operation over to his partners in 1865. They were the Yeamans: he a clown, she a rider, who had been in various Australian circuses for some years. In September 1865 Risley presented a program of Japanese performers at the Royal Olympic which was a novelty in Yoko-



This full color lithograph illustrates Risley's presentation. Howard Tibbals collection.

hama, but was not well received owing to the refusal of the star performer to present an advertised specialty. In 1866 Risley imported a herd of dairy cows into Yokohama from San Francisco, another first for that country. He established the sale of milk and ice cream at an ice house he owned, the ice being imported from China.

During the Yedo era, private citizens in Japan had never been allowed to leave the country, just as foreigners were not welcomed to visit. But in May 1866 the government decreed that passports for exit would be established. Risley desired to take a troupe of performers to the Paris Exposition of 1867, and thus it was that the first-ever Japanese passports--numbers 1 to 18--were issued to his troupe. He had to deposit a large sum of money with the government to guarantee the safe return of the performers. This was in November 1866. A second troupe, this headed by a Japanese top-spinner, were issued the next group of passports, numbered 19 to 27.

On December 5 Risley and his Japanese performers departed Yokohama for San Francisco. The troupe received an enthusiastic welcome. Risley took in a partner, Thomas Maguire (1824?-1896), and the company became Maguire and Risley's "Imperial Japanese Troupe." In May 1867 they reached New York. Odell speaks of them as a sensation. Mark Twain, writing from New York to the San Francisco *Alta California* (16 June 1867) said, in part, "Tom Maguire's Japanese Jugglers have taken New York by storm. . . . It has to be a colossal sensation that is able to set everybody talking in New York, but the Japs did it. And I got precious tired of it for the first few days."

All in all, the troupe gave a hundred and fifty performances in California and New York. They went to England in December 1867, and from there to the Continent. Several other Japanese troupes followed them within a year, lured by promises of great profits. The star of the Maguire-Risley company was a boy named Umekichi who appeared with his father in an acrobatic act. However, calling it just an acrobatic act does not do justice to the per-

formers. They were accomplished at plate-spinning, rope walking, juggling, and other turns. The boy was known as Little "All Right," because of his use of that phrase to reassure his audiences that he was not in danger. The Risley troupe returned to New York in 1869 having toured America, France, Britain, Holland, Belgium, Spain and Portugal.

After a farewell engagement at the Tammany Hall on 6 February, the troupe was split. One group, including "All Right," remained with Risley, and they traveled together until early in 1870. The rest of the Japanese returned home in March 1869.

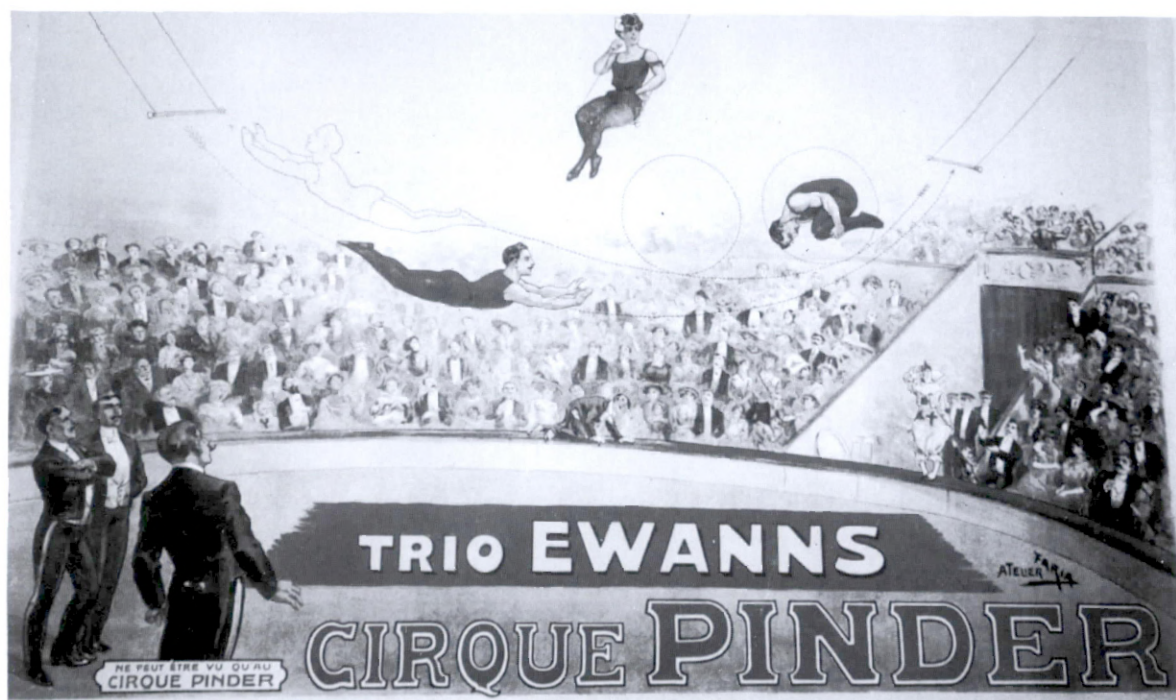
Risley's last adventure was in bringing a variety troupe from Europe to New York; it proved to be a financial disaster. He set up as a variety agent in Philadelphia, and again failed. He suffered a nervous breakdown of some sort and was institutionalized. He died in May 1874.

In a life of constant movement, that even by modern standards seems to have a hectic quality about it, he stands out for his introduction of the act that still carries his name, over a hundred-fifty years after he first performed it, for his carrying the western amphitheatre to Japan, and for introducing the first Japanese performers into America and Europe.

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After operating a two car show for several years, we built it up to three cars and then four cars. In 1924 we operated it as Harris Bros., traveling on five cars. We had a big season that year and my brother Howard and I decided to enlarge the show to ten cars. Andrew Downie had sold his fifteen car railroad circus to the Miller brothers at Maryland, Oklahoma to augment their wild west show. He had leased the title "Walter L. Main Circus," for several years and he operated a fifteen car show using that title. One year he had May Wirth with it, another year, Stella Wirth. No one ever accused Andrew Downie of not putting on a first class performance.

Andrew Downie started in the circus business as a performer. He had a dancing "spade" act. He and his wife would get up on the side of a spade and do a very credible dance act; they doubled in a couple of other turns. He finally got into the circus business as an owner with a fellow named Al F. Wheeler, called the Downie & Wheeler Circus. Afterwards he bought Wheeler out and operated his Downie Bros. Circus, and one time he called it Col. La Tena's Big Circus, and Montana Jack's Big One Ring Circus. La Tena was his wife's maiden name.

Anyway, he used different titles. He finally got ahold of the Walter L. Main title and found out that really meant something. It was a great drawing card down through the east. Downie operated it for several years and made a great deal of money out of it.

After he sold the circus the title was available. I contacted Main and made a deal with him whereby I would lease the title for one year, \$75 each week the show was on the road. In 1925 we had a terrific season. We made almost \$100,000 with this ten car Main show, which previously had been operated as a fifteen car circus.

In 1926, the Walter L. Main fifteen car circus went to Long Island for twelve days, floating across on the Lackawanna Railroad to Long Island, and leaving up through Hell Gate bridge for a tour through New England, leaving on the New York Central and the New Haven railroads. The first town played on Long Island was Port Washington. The show had a terrific day's business there. The programs--we had a stock program with an insert printed on both sides of a sheet which we put inside with a list of the acts. And the show would bring up so many of these stock programs with a lithograph cover, and so forth, and

FLOYD KING

A REMINISCENCE

Part Two

about twenty or thirty pages inside, and they'd insert these lineups. We had so much business there in Port Washington, that they sold out all the programs that they had, so *Variety*, a magazine devoted to theatrical people, gave a report on the show and told about the circus selling these [lineup] sheets for a quarter apiece, when the covers were sold out.

That same year we discovered some fellow, saying he represented the Walter L. Main Circus, would go into stores on Long Island and sell about eighteen or twenty advertising banners, \$5, \$10, \$15 or \$20, or what he could get. These banners were to be displayed in the street parade and to be hung up in the big tent. We had a tremendous day's business there in Port Washington and there were no banners in the street parade and none hung up. The pros-

Andrew Downie, long time circus owner, on left, with Charles Ringling. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives.



ecuting attorney came out, representing some merchants in town, and told them about it. My brother took the prosecuting attorney in the office and showed him the books, and there was no one connected with the show with the name that was signed on these advertising contracts. The prosecuting attorney was pretty hot

about not being able to locate the party.

When the Gentry-Patterson Circus closed down in Arkansas in late 1925, the side show manager and several other people came over to our Walter L. Main Circus in North Carolina where we were showing. The side show manager told my brother about the equipment they had with the show. All the flat cars except one were steel, and there was high class parade stuff. He told my brother it would be a great idea if he bought this show, which was bankrupt, and enlarge our ten car show to fifteen cars. My brother said that operating with ten cars he had nowhere for the workmen to sleep. They were sleeping under flat cars and the weather was cold down south in the Carolinas in the latter part of October and November. Howard said we had to add another car. I said, "Well, the first thing we've got to do, instead of adding on one car, you have to pay for fifteen cars so you might just as well enlarge it to fifteen cars."

A fellow by the name of John Pluto had formerly been with the Cole Bros. Circus as a concessionaire selling balloons and so forth in his younger days out west. Pluto was in Baltimore where he made a great deal of money selling household appliances, like knives, forks, and so forth. He would go into a factory and give outright a twenty-four piece set of silverware in a nice case to the foreman, saying, "This is for your wife and yourself, take it home. Now here's another case and they all have numbers on it, 1, 2, 3, on up. The fellow with number 24 would pay twenty-four cents; the fellow with number 1 would pay one cent, and on up." He had four or five of these salesmen on the road and they were unloading hundreds of these boxes daily and a great deal of profit poured into the circus.

Pluto got ahold of me over in Wilmington, North Carolina. I was closely watching the railroads to get in a town two weeks prior to another show, like the Sparks Circus or the John Robinson Circus. Pluto says, "If you come

over here now, you can buy the show cheap; if you wait a little later until they run into business, the fellow won't want to sell it." I couldn't get away, so the Gentry-Patterson Circus finally folded and went into winter quarters at Paola, Kansas. They owed the bank there \$90,000 over a period of years. They sent out a circular of what they had for sale. I never got a copy of it, although Pluto told me a few days later that he got a copy of the inventory. He got ahold of me and says, "We can go out there and buy this show cheap."

During the winter of 1925-1926 I met Pluto in St. Louis and we went out to Paola, Kansas and made a deal with the president of the bank there. He was a high class fellow. I told him that we had gotten that circular that they wanted to sell the show, and instead of writing for photographs and asking for a lot of information, we left our business and spent our money to come out to see him to see if we could buy the show at a fair price. He says, "Yes." I says, "Well, what is the least cash dollar it will take to take over the Gentry-Patterson Circus. And just as he spoke up and said, "\$40,000," the cashier was there and he had his mouth open. He was going to make a bid himself. He had already contacted Jess Adkins and they made a deal that if they could buy the show cheap or take it over and let them operate it, they could pay off the indebtedness and have the circus. So he said, "I'll sell it for \$40,000 cash."

So I says, "Well, I'll tell you what, Mr. Sponable, that is a lot of money and the first thing we've got to do is find out where we can store these railroad cars. I'll tell you the deal we'll make with you. We will give you \$1,000 apiece right now, \$2,000, and come back here in ten days with \$23,000 in cash. That will make \$25,000 we'll pay you down for the show and will leave an indebtedness of \$15,000 due on July 1."

He said, "I thought you said you were going to pay it all cash, outright." I says, "Well, we've got to find a place to put it first, and we got to ship it over there and so forth like that."

Anyway, we made a deal with Sponable. We bought the show for the terms I've just outlined above and shipped it to Louisville, Kentucky. We wanted the cars moved to Jef-



Two Gentry-Patterson cages that were formerly on Sig Sautelle.

feron City where the government had thousands of feet of railroad cars for the doings over in that area. They used area as a storehouse for all types of Army stuff, like pistols, shotguns, and almost every conceivable thing they had stored in the buildings there for future emergencies. We wintered our horses at Fort Knox, Kentucky. It previously had been a camp for the Army and it had been enclosed. A gentleman there in Louisville, who we bought our hay from, had sold a great deal of hay to the Army during the year for the mules and horses out at Fort Knox. He got ahold of some of the fellows he had done business with in those days who were high officials in Washington at that time. He made arrangements for us to lease certain buildings at Camp Knox and lease trackage for the twenty-five railroad cars we had, fifteen car Gentry show and the ten car Main show. We could place these cars across the river from Louisville at Jefferson. That way we got through the winter at a very reasonable price, and got ready for the road again. We opened the fifteen car show in Louisville in the

Jess Adkins in the doorway of the Gentry Bros. ticket wagon in 1926.



spring, a few days earlier we opened the ten car show over, I believe, at Shelbyville, Kentucky. The manager was Jess Adkins. I made a deal with Adkins to manage the show and receive \$5,000 a year, plus his board and lodging for a small percentage of the profits without the winter quarters.

Jess Adkins managed the ten car circus that my brother Howard and myself owned for two years. The contract was for \$5,000 each year with a percentage over a certain amount. At the end of the second year he resigned and took on the management of the John Robinson Circus.

Adkins was a high class businessman and we got along splendid together, although my brother resented the fact that we had two shows. Howard wanted me to pay all my attention to the circus he operated on fifteen cars. The done deal sounded okay and he was able to go to Europe during the winter and unbeknown to me, and made an extensive tour of Europe. I figured the least he could have done . . . he says, "Since I spent so much on the tour to Europe with my wife, here's an equal amount for you." I didn't like that part, but anyway, it's difficult for partners to get along even though they are brothers.

We went along every year until the depression hit us in, I believe, 1929, and brother it really hit. I was over at Federal, Arkansas, and I owed a bank in Dawsburg, Tennessee, about \$15,000. I went down to the Western Union and wired them \$1,000. I figured the money I took in during the rest of the season, this was the latter part of October, I would use to winter the circus on. It cost us about \$1,500 a day to operate the ten car show. We were making a hundred or so a day

prior to that, and when that depression hit in 1929, it dropped down to a \$1,000 a day gross, and then to \$700 and \$800. Finally it got so we were only taking in three, four, or five hundred dollars, just enough money to get us to the next town. However, we finally got down to Brenham, Texas where we closed, and I was able to get out through the help of the National Printing Company, owner Thomas Hanks, a high class businessman. My brother left the fifteen car show in Paris, Tennessee. They owed the Donaldson Lithograph Company some money and they shipped

the show to winter quarters in West Baden and most of the elephants and other animals were sold outright. There was very little demand for any kind of circus equipment at the time. Everybody was broke flat, didn't have a dime.

I did manage though to get the Cole Brothers Circus out on the road. We opened in 1930 in Uvalde, Texas, the home of the old vice-president of the United States who lived there. We went on down from there to the Mexican border, and went from there straight across on the Union Pacific to San Diego, California and the town below there. All together we paraded five times in old Mexico. We were just getting enough to get from town to town, although we hit one lucky streak down in New Mexico in a mining town and the show grossed \$3,500.

The show went on up the road and got as far north as the northern part of Washington. Christy Bros. was headed west on the Northern Pacific railroad, and the year before we had been out there on the Great Northern, so there was only one railroad to go east on and that was Milwaukee. They had very few towns so I had to go down the old death trail again, down on the D & RG down from Ogden, Utah into Pueblo, Colorado and on through Colorado. We were just ahead of the wheat harvest and the farmers were busy getting the binders ready and so forth. We finally got into Scottsburg, Kentucky about the third week in August. We had a double move out of there and we couldn't go any further. We had to throw in the towel. That ended my circus in 1930. Even the Ringling show had great trouble that year.

The next four years I was with the Al G. Barnes Circus as general press agent. From there I went over to the new Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus. I was with that show for four or five years as general agent.

Each year when the season closed and everything got put away at Central City Park in Macon, Georgia, Charlie Sparks and his wife would go to Hot Springs, Arkansas and spend ten days or two weeks at the Arlington Hotel, taking the baths and resting up. In the fall of 1928, he ran into H. B. Gentry who was in Hot Springs. In the course of their daily visits, sunning on the veranda of the Arlington Hotel, Charlie Sparks told H. B. Gentry, "If I could get \$190,000 for the Sparks Circus, I would sell it and get out of the circus business and retire." Gentry said, "Well, I'll tell you what. When I get back up to Indianapolis I'll look around and I'll see if I can promote some capital, and no doubt

you'll be hearing from me in the near future."

So Gentry went out and, in the course of a week or so, got ahold of Jerry Mugivan on the telephone and told him of this conversation, that the Sparks Circus could be bought for \$190,000. Mugivan said to him, "If you can buy the show for \$180,000, I'll make you a present of \$10,000 and give you a job as manager of the Sparks Circus when it hits the road."

A little while later, when Sparks was in Macon at the Dempsey Hotel where he lived, he got a wire from H. B. Gentry. It says: "I'm on my way to Florida and thought I'd stop and say hello to you while passing through Macon. I'll arrive at 3:30 tomorrow afternoon on the Southern train number so-and-so." Sparks met him and drove him up to the hotel and they visited and had dinner together. He said, "Charlie, I've got a man in Indianapolis, in fact several men, they are putting the money together and we decided to accept your offer of the show for \$180,000. If you'll sell for it \$180,000, that's just \$10,000 less than you offered it to me." Sparks said, "Well, I'll tell you what, H. B., I've been thinking the matter over since I left Hot Springs and I've decided I don't want to sell it now, so just forget the matter."

Gentry didn't forget the matter. He got ahold of a law firm here in Macon and explained the circumstances to them about Sparks wanting to sell the circus. This law firm got in touch with Charles Sparks' law firm and these two firms of lawyers got ahold of Sparks

Charles Sparks, owner of Sparks Circus.



and Gentry, got them together and in a slight time Sparks finally decided to sell the show for \$180,000 to Gentry. The sale was consummated and that ended the matter.

Charles Sparks had associated with him Clifton Sparks as a half-owner who represented his two sisters and himself as the other half owners. Over a period of years when Charlie Sparks got ahold of the Sparks Old Virginia Circus down in the south. John Sparks had been over around Winston-Salem, North Carolina with the Sparks Circus, and saw a fellow whittling on what he thought was a rock. He talked to the fellow and found out it was lignum neuvita, a tree-like substance that looked like concrete which could be whittled like a piece of wood. He told him this was found in great abundance about ten miles from a nearby place in the Winston-Salem area. He told Sparks that he had a big summer resort place that was quite a watering retreat. Sparks went over there. He saw this hotel there and he bought it. On the Sparks two car circus they had a couple of lions who were great breeders. Every year they turned out quite a number of lions, so Sparks shipped several of these cubs, small lions, up to this place near Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

The Southern Railroad had agreed to run a track out from the main line over to this city where the hotel was located. John Sparks had been away from this resort place for quite a while. He got back one day and found the lions that had grown up with him around the show. When they were cubs he had played with them and petted them on the back. He stuck his hands in the cage, petting one. The cage was very dirty and hadn't been cleaned out properly and one of the lions severely mauled John Sparks' arm. They rushed him to the hospital. Charlie Sparks told me that the show was down at Tallahassee, Florida and they weren't showing on Sunday. They were waiting for the next day and Mrs. John Sparks came down from East Brady, Pennsylvania with small children, two girls and Clifton Sparks. They decided to make a visit while the show was in Florida, showing every day down as far south as Key West, Florida.

He said this Sunday night he was sitting there in the car, the station agent came down the hill from his office with a telegram for Charlie Sparks, stating that John Sparks' arm had been severely mauled by a lion and over at this Bladen Newcomb, North Carolina place. They advised him and his family to come at once to

Winston-Salem, that John was in such and such a hospital there. He came back and imparted the news to Mrs. John Sparks and they dressed, and Charlie went along with them. They caught a night train out going into Jacksonville, Florida, where they caught another train going into Winston-Salem, North Carolina. On the way up there, going through the Carolinas, Charlie went up and bought a newspaper from a butcher in the smoker. In reading the *Charlotte Observer*, he noticed a third of a column story about John Sparks' arm had been amputated two times to try and offset this blood clot that was causing him so much trouble. The article said his arm had been amputated as far up as his arm pit. He tore out this page. He didn't want Mrs. Sparks to see the details, and carried the paper back and gave it to Mrs. Sparks to read on the train. When they got there, John Sparks was dead. The blood clot had developed into such a state that it killed him.

In the meantime, Clifton Sparks had grown up. He was the son of John Sparks. He was installed in the ticket wagon as the treasurer. He was a very efficient and capable young man, who died this past year up in Connecticut, where he was living. The show was wintering in Salisbury, North Carolina, a few miles away from the Southern Railway shops. A great deal of work had to be done on the wooden flat cars in those days, end sills and side sills had to be replaced and it was customary for a circus to winter somewhere near the shops of a railroad. In the course of wintering in Salisbury, Clifton Sparks met a young lady selling tickets in a local picture theater. They became quite well acquainted and they eventually married. In the course of years, I'd say twelve, fifteen or eighteen years, Mrs. Clifton Sparks got very tired of traveling and kept hammering to her husband, "We ought to get out of the business and retire and get in another line of business, try to raise a family," and so forth. After being married about fifteen years, Clifton and his wife finally had a baby. So this added up to Charles Sparks' worry that Mrs. Clifton and Cliff wanted to get out of the business. They were mainly instrumental in inducing Charlie Sparks to sell the Sparks Circus.

H. B. [Gentry] took over the management of the show and they sent Sam Dill down as assistant manager. They worked during the winter repairing the equipment and getting it



The Sparks Circus side show bannerline in 1929.

ready for the road. Three days before the circus hit the road, Jerry Mugivan went down to look things over and Charlie got a hold of Mugivan, and took him in a little park adjacent to the hotel. They sat down on a bench and Charlie Sparks said, "Mr. Mugivan, I know I told H. B. Gentry that I wanted to sell the show and I didn't mind selling it. But to think after I struggled with this show, taking over when it was two cars—as a matter of fact, one car—and building it up to a twenty car railroad circus, it really hurt me to think that I was flimflammed around just like a joint or [pito] mob would do to a sucker when they are beating him. I was played a sucker trick all the way through, that this was a purchase by H. B. Gentry, as a matter of fact, it was a purchase by you and Ed Ballard, the other owner."

[Later King re-told the story of the sale of the Sparks Circus with further details.] The Sparks Circus under the ownership of Mugivan and Bowers wintered at Central City Park in Macon, Georgia. About three days before the circus hit the road, Mugivan came to Macon. Sparks got a hold of Mugivan, took him out to a little park adjacent to the hotel, tears were almost in his eyes when he said to Mugivan, "Jerry, I've known you many, many years, and always thought you was my friend. I didn't mind selling the Sparks Circus, but the way it was handled flabbergasted me. It was going to be sold to a group of citizens in Indianapolis, Indiana, and I found out a little bit later that it was for Mugivan and Bowers and the American Circus Corporation. It broke my heart, after all these years I had built it up from a two car circus to a twenty car railroad show, that it was to be taken away from me like it was." Mugivan says, "Well, I'll tell you what, Charlie, a week from today the circus will be in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, I'll be down there and Bert Bow-

ers will be down there, too. If everything is agreeable with Bert Bowers, I'm willing to sell the show back to you for what you paid for it, less the cost of the money we have put into it during the winter."

So, the following week, Charlie Sparks was there, Cliff and his wife were there, and Bert Bowers and they got on a wagon tongue out around the big top and Mugivan says, "Well, Charlie, we'll sell it back to you if you're still willing to buy it." About that time, Mrs. Clifton Sparks was sitting on the wagon tongue, she broke out in tears. That was enough for Charlie. He says, "Oh, well, forget about it Jerry. You see my partner's wife is crying. She wants to get out of the circus business, and we went in together, the Sparks, and we'll retire together; so forget about it." Mugivan says, "Well, okay, I'll tell you what, Charlie. At the end of the year before the Sparks Circus closes, if everything is going along like it is now we'll sell you back the show if you want to go out again, less the cost of wintering it."

Charlie was in a hard hassle all during the summer. He went from one show to another, and after having been in the circus business for over forty years, he was like a fish out of water away from the circus. He visited all the shows he could and finally the latter part of August, he visited the John Robinson Circus up near Detroit. Mugivan and Sparks got together and Charlie said, "I've decided to take your offer, Mr. Mugivan, this fall when the show closes I want to buy the show back, less the cost of wintering." Mugivan spoke up and says, "Well, I'll tell you what, Charlie. We are working on a deal now and in a few weeks we may not even own a red wagon of our own. We're working on a deal now where we might sell out completely all of our circuses." So a few days later it was announced, I believe around Labor Day, that John Ringling had bought the American Circus Corporation for around about a million and a half dollars in cash.

Most very wealthy men don't carry a lot of money around; as fast as they have money made, they invest it in something. So, when John Ringling bought the American Circus Corporation, he didn't have the dough to come up with the million and a half. A long-time friend of his was Sam Gumpertz. Sam had operated a freak show around Coney Island in New York for

many years and later became associated with the Prudence Finance Company, which had mortgages on a great deal of property around New York City, apartment houses, and business houses and so forth. So, through John Ringling's friendship with Sam Gumpertz arrangements were made to borrow the money from the Prudence Investment Company to pay off Mugivan, Bowers and Ballard for the purchase of the American Circus Corporation.

In November, 1928, a conference was held of the [American Circus] Corporation general agents, along with Mugivan and Bowers in Peru, Indiana. They were laying out and discussing details regarding printing. All at once, Mugivan says, "Where is this agent for the Sparks Circus, Tony Ballenger?" Someone spoke up and said he was down in his home in London, Ohio. Mugivan says, "Get him on the phone." They got him on the phone and Mugivan says, "What are you doing down there. "Oh," he says, "just twiddling around." Mugivan says, "You better get up here at Peru, Indiana and twittle up here. We're having a conference of the general agents and we want you here." The minute he hung up, Ballenger got Charlie Sparks on the phone and he says, "Say, listen, you haven't sold any circus to H. B. Gentery; you've sold it to Mugivan and Bowers."

Jerry Mugivan was born and raised in Terre Haute, Indiana. In his early years he was a hopscotcher and a gambler. He worked mainly out of the middle west. He went to Alaska in the old Rush along about 1898. He came back to the area of Kansas City, Missouri, and he worked out of there. Around the old Coates House there he came in contact with grifters, circus and carnival owners. He became attached to the circus. There were two brothers in Kansas City called the Smith brothers. They had been railroad conductors on a railroad that operated out of Kansas City. They acquired a ten or twelve car circus which they called Howe's Great London. One by one, the two Smith boys passed on and they left one widow to operate the circus.

Mugivan purchased the concessions with the show for one season for \$5,000 from Mrs. Smith. This consisted of candy stands, concessions in the side show and so forth. In those days candy stands, novelties and candy floss didn't mean much to circus goers. The income was very limited, mostly for lemonade on a hot day, big tall glasses for a nickel, and so forth, like that. He became very friendly



Jerry Mugivan, spark-plug of the American Circus Corporation in the 1920s.

with Mrs. Smith, who was a Catholic, incidentally. Mr. Mugivan was a Catholic. One day when the show was down in Georgia, he had to go into Atlanta to get some supplies, balloons, whips and novelties and so forth, and he also had to bring back some snubbing rope, a big heavy rope about two inches in diameter to lower the wagons down the runs and unloading the show. In those years, I'm talking about 1902, they didn't use cable for lowering these wagons, they used a heavy manila rope.

There was a young fellow around the

Bert Bowers, partner of Mugivan in the American Circus Corporation.



show from Wellington, Kansas named Bert Bowers. Mugivan told Mrs. Smith, "I'm going into Kansas City and I'll be away over night, but I'll have a young fellow around the show who's very responsible and I'm instructing him to handle my privileges and check up when I'm gone. I'm instructing him to go down to the cars with you at night and carry your bag of silver." In those days they weren't so much paper and nearly all the income, a great part of it, was handled by silver, silver dimes, quarters, halves and dollar pieces. Mrs. Smith says, "Jerry Mugivan, I trust no Protestant S.O.B." But, anyway, Bowers went down with Mrs. Smith, carried the bag while Mr. Mugivan was away.

Incidentally, Bowers checked all the concessions that were operating and these concessions had run into quite a bit of money the day or two that Mr. Mugivan was away. When Mugivan came back, Bowers turned over to him quite a sizeable sum of money, so many times more than he had been in the habit of collecting daily on an average. That taught Mugivan that Bowers was straight forward and honest and he eventually took Bowers in as a half partner.

Jerry Mugivan was the old wagon wheel horse and he always discussed things with Bowers and formed his own opinion. They were equal partners with the show, but, as I said, Mugivan was the wheel horse.

In the course of time, Bowers' wife died in Arizona from an asthma attack. He had sent her out there on a private car, hoping the climate in Arizona would help her. So for quite a number of years he was a widower around the circus. He got mixed up with a lady around the show who was married and when the show closed Bowers was managing the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. He went in to West Baden, Indiana, where the show was wintering, and was stopping at the Homestead Hotel and this lady pulled away from her husband and stopped at another place there in West Baden. When Mugivan heard about this, he went to Bowers and said to him, "Get rid of that woman!" Bowers thought it over and it didn't take him but a little while to put the lady on a train and send her back to her home and to her husband.

As time went along, Mugivan's mother died in Terre Haute. It seemed to affect Mugivan greatly. He became very religious. He frequently said he wouldn't have these joints around the circus in spite of the fact these boys grew up with him. He'd say, "I wish they'd go over and join Floyd King." In

the course of time, he completely eliminated these joints and several of them, including Hal Farmer and others, moved over to shows operated by my brother and me. Most of these boys were around us quite a number of years and they were very capable.

In 1929, when the Al G. Barnes, Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, John Robinson and Sparks circuses owned by Mugivan, Bowers and their associate Ed Ballard were sold to John Ringling the depression hit a few weeks later. Believe me, it really hit in a powerful blow. For shows that cost \$2,700 a day, like our fifteen car Gentry Bros. Circus, business dropped down around about \$1,200 a day. When you're losing \$1,000 or \$1,500 a day, no matter what your bankroll is, there's only so long you can stand it.

My brother called me from Paris, Tennessee and told me he had no funds on hand for a double move out of Paris to the next stand. I said, "Well, if you've got no dough and you've got no other way of getting there, the only thing I know to do is to close." Which he did. That was the end of the Gentry Bros. Circus.

Incidentally, the Gentry Bros. Circus was a powerful drawing card for children and in later years, circus people are great followers, when circus owners saw the strength of the Gentry Bros. Circus all of them added dog and pony and monkey acts to the show, which killed greatly the drawing capacity of the Gentry Bros. Circus.

When my brother and I got ahold of the title and bought it from the bankers in Paola, Kansas, paying \$40,000, it was a complete fifteen car circus. We found out that the show had drawing power. People still considered Gentry Bros. as a dog and pony show and not as a complete three ring circus, which in recent years had been converted into by us and the former owners, Ben Austin and Chickie Newman. Time went along and the following year the Cole Bros. ten car circus operated by myself lasted two-thirds of the 1930 season.

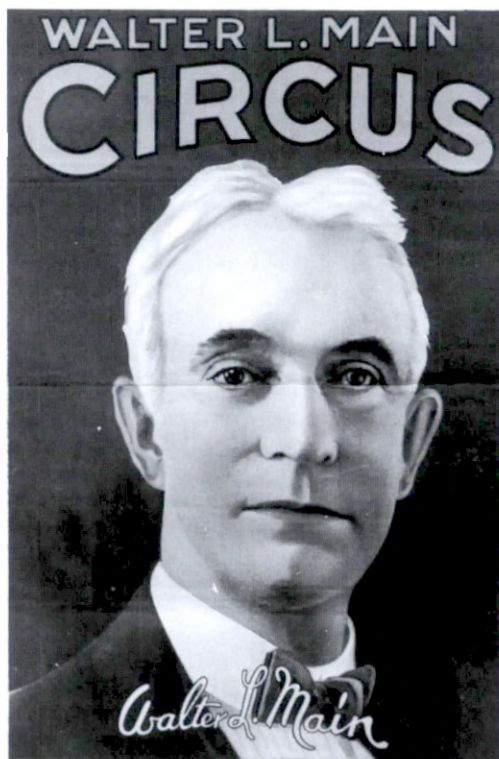
We never missed a payday with the ten car circus during the depression in 1930 until the fourth of July. We closed in Scottsburg, Kentucky along about the 20th of August. I was trying to get the show into the coal fields of eastern Kentucky.

This fellow, Walter L. Main was one of the smartest fellows I ever knew, but he outsmarted himself. He pulled a lot of stunts that didn't take well with the performers. He was at the sale of the Forepaugh-Sells show at Columbus, Ohio, and among the fel-

lows he met there was William P. Hall, the horse trader from Lancaster, Missouri. Hall said, "I'm greatly disappointed. I came up here with money to buy this Forepaugh-Sells show, or part of it, some of the animals and equipment, and I find out I'm leaving with nothing." Main spoke up and says, "Well, if you pay me \$30,000, I'll sell you the Walter L. Main Circus, less the horses with the show," because he figured Hall had all the horses he wanted out there around Lancaster, Missouri. So, in those days, everything was handled in the way of gold. William P. Hall drew up a contract with Walter L. Main and paid him \$10,000 cash down in gold, with the understanding that within thirty days he was to come back with \$20,000 and take possession of the Walter L. Main Circus wintering there in Geneva, Ohio; as I said, less the horses with the circus. Hall came into Geneva, Ohio in thirty days, he went up to Main's office downtown, unbelted a belt and pulled out \$20,000 in gold that he had concealed, and says, "This is for the final payment of the Walter L. Main Circus."

Walter L. Main thought he was very smart and cunning and so he told Hall, "I've changed my mind and I've decided I don't want to sell it." So Main got to thinking, and says, "Let me step out a while," and he went down to see his lawyer and told him the circumstances. The lawyer said to Main, "You damn

Portrait litho of Walter L. Main used in 1926.



fool, go back over there and sign this paper over to William P. Hall, 'received cash in full for the Walter L. Main Circus, as operated during such and such a season, less the horses with the show.'" That ended the Walter L. Main Circus for all time under the ownership of Walter L. Main. Main's idea was to raise Hall another five or ten thousand dollars on the sale, and he was highly cunning on that.

A few weeks after I leased the title from him Main asked me for a job. I says, "Doing what?" He says, "A job as general agent of the show." I says, "Well, I'm my own general agent, myself." He says, "Well, if you ever need anybody, you'd hire me." I says, "That's right. If I ever need anybody on advance, I'll hire you." We had no trouble with Main the first year, at all. The second year we went out, we had two shows, Gentry and Main. Main and his wife traveled along with the ten car circus for several weeks down through the mountains of West Virginia. He got some mileage from me to go back to Geneva, Ohio to attend to some business. Instead of that he took the mileage and jumped up ahead of the Walter L. Main show. He would get into a town and tell them that the circus was owned by a couple of Jewish boys named Floyd and Howard King. Well, we had hired quite a number of Jewish employees in other years. We found out they were very capable and industrious workers. Main would go to the mayor and some of the councilmen and one or two churchmen. He told them that this Main circus coming to town was loaded with privileges, dancing girls, and hoochy-koochy and what not. The result of it, when the circus would get into town, we had a very hard time putting on two shows without any concessions.

Every now and then we would get into a town where we'd run up against the same thing. I got out a sheet of paper about the size of a quarter sheet and I started it off at the top: "Plenty for defense, but not one penny for a blackmailer and till-tapping thief." And I wrote in there, on that whole sheet, in ten point type set up in newspaper style with proper headings on it, about the dealings I had with Walter L. Main. And I really blasted him. Everything I said in there was perfect and correct, otherwise he would have turned it over to the postal inspectors. Every day I would mail a batch of this sheet into Geneva, Ohio to the pastor of the Episcopal Church which Main sometimes attended. I also sent it to the Nickel Plate agent, New York Cen-

tral agent, the pastor of the First Methodist Church, the pastor of the First Baptist Church, the pastor of the Catholic Church, and the manager of the local barber shop. Each day I'd think of a new name to address the circular to in Geneva, telling about Walter L. Main, his home town that I was mailing this to, about what a till-tapping thief the old gent was. Anyway, he said, "I gathered up a whole basketful of these, these different fellows handed me the letter." I said, "Well, if you'd behave yourself and gone along in a businesslike way. We would still have the old title and your show would have been on the road with the Walter L. Main title and you'd be getting revenue every week." He says, "Well, this lawyer I had in Ashtabula, Ohio, twelve miles away, told me just what to say and do and I followed him, and I did what he instructed me to do."

That went along for several weeks, so Howard Bary, the legal adjuster with the show, started tracing Main. Bary finally ran him down sitting in a park in the Boston Commons in Boston, Massachusetts. When Main saw the legal adjuster approaching him, he got scared and started off. Finally Bary got ahold of him, intercepted him, and says, "I'm up here to see you and you're doing us some injustice. You leased us this title and you're doing everything you can to put us out of business." Main says, "Well, Floyd King promised me a job and he reneged on it and I think I'm entitled to some adjustment." He got him back to the show and my brother made a deal with him that he would cease and desist all activities ahead of the Walter L. Main Circus upon the payment of \$3,000, with the understanding that he wasn't to say anything to Floyd King about this; which later I heard.

Anyway, it rocked along and in 1926, he went up ahead of the Main show. At the close of the previous year, my brother said, "I want nothing more to do with Walter L. Main. I don't want to deal with a hypocrite and a sharpshooter, so I'll use the Gentry Bros. title and you use the Walter L. Main title with the ten car show, if you wish." And we came to that conclusion.

Main pulled the same stuff he had the year before. As a result of it, when the ten car show got into town we couldn't bat an eye whether we wanted to or not. He had notified the state police and they had troopers trailing the show every day. He'd written the governor of Pennsylvania at Harrisburg, who turned the letter over to the state trooper's chief man, who then turned it over to a couple state troopers who

worked that particular area where the circus was. The only way we could beat this Main was this, he done this for several days, and finally I sent him a wire, "Due to the continued bad business, the Walter L. Main Circus, we've decided to take it off the road." And I sent this wire to him in Geneva, Ohio. Hard and fast, I got another wire back from him, "I got no idea at all of hurting you at all. You won't hear nothing more from us. The only thing I want you to do, you're coming into Geneva area, you're going to show Conneaut, I want to add on an act or two before you get there, kinda build up the show, because I have quite a reputation around this area." We added on an act or two, as he suggested, and that ended our dealings that year with Walter L. Main.

The following winter we wintered down in Alexandria, Louisiana. I took the show out under the title Cole Bros. Circus as we were going to head for the west; the Main show had been out there only once and that was many years prior. So I gave up the lease for the title of the Walter L. Main Circus. The first town we jumped from winter quarters into Princeton, Kentucky, the opening stand. In those days there were very few business activities in the south. Walter L. Main had written the station agent of the IC Railroad there, blasting the show from one end to the other, told him what a poor show we had, and everything. Now this, when I had no connection whatsoever with Walter L. Main. I'd given up the lease of his title. I'd paid him off in full, how

Zack Terrell, long time manager of the Sells-Floto Circus.



ever, he wanted to blast the show, hoping we'd pick up the title again.

Zack Terrell operated a spindle concession around the Mugivan and Bowers shows for quite a number of years. He was a hot shot gambler out of a town near Owensboro, Kentucky. Terrell had operated a spindle machine in the John Robinson side show for many years. He'd been around the show for almost twenty years. When they bought the Sells-Floto Circus they had to have a manager, and Mugivan said to Terrell, "If you'll invest \$10,000 in the Sells-Floto Circus, I'll appoint you as a manager on a certified salary," which Terrell did. He ran the Sells-Floto Circus very successfully for quite a number of years under the tutelage and instruction of Mugivan.

Jess Adkins was in the winter quarters and had charge of the building of all the wagons and all the work for the various circuses that wintered in Peru, Indiana. Terrell would come in a week or two before the circus went out and pick up the management from there on and would go out, and was quite successful in the management of the Sells-Floto Circus. For many years it was the top money maker of the circuses they owned. Mugivan told me one time, when I was in Peru, he said, "Of all these buildings we have constructed around on winter quarters, a hospital building, a building for Sells-Floto, a building for the storing of equipment for John Robinson, and the other shows, I don't have five cents worth of insurance on any of these buildings. The reason is this: Sells-Floto Circus today is at Passaic, New Jersey. If it didn't rain on them and they have a nice bright sunshiny day there, they are liable to rack up a gross of around \$8,500. If it rains on them all day long, they'll be lucky to get \$2,000 on the day. In other words, we're gambling on the weather every day in the circus business. Circus business is very precarious and as long as we're gambling on the weather, we'd just as well gamble on the insurance." So he had no insurance on the buildings there. He gambled that they wouldn't catch fire, which they never did.

You spoke of Eddie Arlington. I first met Arlington the first full year I was in the circus business in Venice, California. I had been engaged by Al G. Barnes as general press agent. At the time I was a reporter for the Memphis, Tennessee *Commercial Appeal*. I left Memphis and went to California and joined the Barnes circus. One morning I had breakfast with Eddie Arlington. He was out there as general agent and part owner of the 101

Ranch show. They were shooting some early wild west moving pictures and I would see these employees of the 101 Ranch show and the picture men going out every morning with their tripods, cameras and so forth to shoot these pictures. Arlington had previously been a railroad contractor on the Barnum & Bailey Circus. His father had operated the cookhouse on that show. They had contracted to feed the people for a certain percentage. For instance, eighteen, nineteen or twenty-one cents a person. It was the custom in the olden days.

Eddie Arlington was a railroad contractor for the Barnum & Bailey Circus. He was a very smart and acute showman to his fingertips. When they [Eddie and his father] had left the Barnum show when it was sold, he reverted over to Pawnee Bill's Wild West Show, and they finally retired from the circus business. They got into the hotel business in New York City along about 1917 or 1918. He had seven or eight hotels which he operated and the family sold out. Ed was a great fellow for race horses and that was his avocation.

Hal Farmer ran a concession in the side show of the Howe's London Circus for many years. His home was in Evansville, Indiana. He operated what they called the Great American Perfume Company. He had a little stand in the side show with large bottles of perfume on it. Some were marked \$10, some \$15, some \$20 and some \$5. They would tie it on this black velvet and at the close of the season they said the same perfume bottles that went out came back with the show. Farmer was very gifted, and he made a lot of money for Mugivan and Bowers, and when they eliminated the privilege with the show, he came over and joined the Walter L. Main Circus, and was with that for several years until he finally retired.

Colonel Weaver was a three card monte player. That is, he had three playing cards, one of them was an ace and the idea was, when the player manipulated the cards around, was to pick out the ace. He was a very skillful manipulator and invariably the fellow would pick out the wrong card and, of course, lose. He had what they call an "outside man," who worked with him, and a stick handler who got three or four local town boys, one drove an ice wagon, one done this and that. He hired these boys on the promise of a free ticket to the circus and with a little cash remuneration, if they worked with him on the outside of the joint. He would take them and educate them on how to handle these games. When



Edward Arlington, wild west show owner.

he'd give one a certain push in the palm, and put a dollar there, this fellow was to bet a dollar on the No. 1 card, or the No. 2 card, or the No. 3 card. They would invariably win, these town "punks" they call them, these town kids. That was when a business man around the joint would see one of those boys winning that money, they'd wonder why they couldn't start winning some themselves. They eventually started into the game themselves, through watching these stick handlers and so forth like that.

Weaver was later a part owner of the Rhoda Royal Circus, a fifteen car circus that went out of Montgomery, Alabama. They operated a little over a year and they closed. One of the owners was Rhoda Royal. He told me that he was with the Forepaugh show that was wintering in Philadelphia, and one day in walking through winter quarters he saw a couple of crates of animals that had lions inside, and on there was painted Ringling Bros. Circus, Baraboo, Wisconsin. They were waiting for the express man to come and ship them out. Somebody spoke up and says, "Where in the hell is Baraboo, Wisconsin? And who in the hell are the Ringling Bros.?" At that time, it was along about 1886 or 1887 [probably early 1890], and they were just getting underway with their little wagon show and were trying to accumulate a few wagons.

Art Bowers was a brother of Bert Bowers. He, too, was from Wellington, Kansas. In 1912, at the end of the sea-

son, I was in Montgomery working on a newspaper as a reporter. Howe's Great London Circus, fifteen cars, and the Sanger's European Circus with ten or twelve cars, was wintering out at the fairgrounds. It was the first time I met Mugivan and Bowers and his brother Art. Art and Charlie Mugivan were put in charge of the Van Amburg Circus. They ran it for a year or two, but didn't seem to make any money with the show and it was taken off the road.

Charlie Corey was a nephew by marriage with B. E. Wallace of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. He was an acute businessman and during the latter part of the years of the Hagenbeck-Wallace show under the ownership of Wallace, Corey was the general manager and he was very successful in handling the show. He married a girl who was worth a million dollars. She was the big owner of the Indiana Traction Company. They had forty or fifty lines running out of Indianapolis to different parts of the state. It was a huge money maker, but finally Henry Ford and the paved roads put them out of business. Afterwards, when Corey sold out his interest in the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, he managed the business activities for his wife and himself.

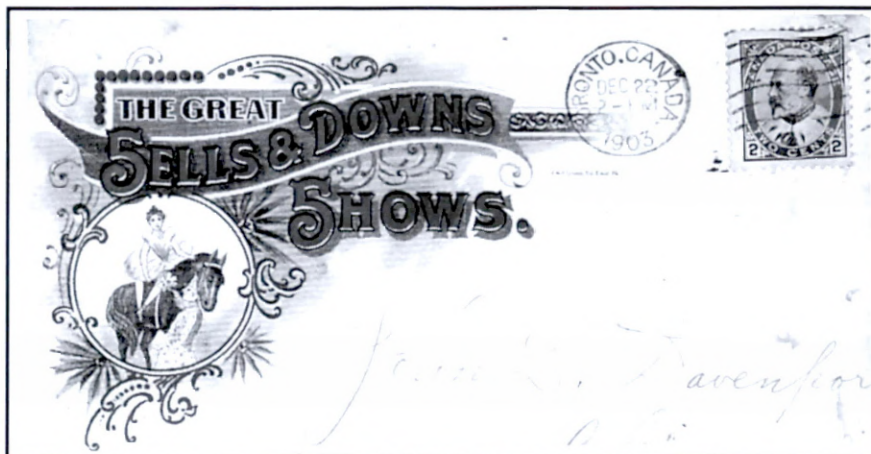
Martin Downs, a Canadian, operated a circus with Willie Sells in 1902. They called it Sells & Downs Circus. It traveled on about fifteen cars that they rented for two years, I believe. Finally Downs bought his partner out. Downs' home was in Toronto, Ontario, but the show wintered at the fairgrounds in Birmingham, Alabama. At that time the big circus printing house in Erie was called the Walker Printing Company [actually Erie Printing]. Over at Jamestown, New York, about twenty miles away, lived a very famous general agent (I'll think of his name in a minute). Walker was worrying about work for his printer, so he got ahold of this general agent over at Jamestown, New York, who had been the general agent for the Sells & Downs Circus. They went down to Birmingham, Alabama. They got there on a Sunday afternoon and went to the little office on the grounds and contacted Downs there. All three sat down and talked about the title for the coming year. One would suggest one title and one another, and after this discussion had been going on for quite a while, this general agent from Jamestown spoke up, says, "Well, when you get through arguing, I'll tell you the title of the circus, and the title will be Cole Bros. World Toured Shows."

Downs was passing a horse one day and he patted him on the back. The horse in the stable tent was scared and hauled away and kicked Downs on the side of his knee. Gangrene set in, so they took Downs to a hospital there in Toronto, Ontario. They made several amputations on this leg to avoid this gangrene which was creeping up the leg, and finally had to take off the leg up near his body. The show had gotten out in North Dakota and due to heavy rains the season was a little late. Instead of being just behind the wheat crop, they got into North Dakota right in the midst of the harvest.

The general agent I spoke of who lived in Jamestown, New York, was Ed C. Knupp, a very highly successful general agent. He dropped dead in Chicago while working on the route of Howe's London Circus.

The original Cole show was the first circus that went from the east to the west coast about 1880. It was operated by a young man named W. W. Cole. His mother was with him and the two of them ran the circus. He made such a huge amount of money that he retired from the circus business and lived in New York and became a New York banker. Later he was a quarter owner of the Adam Forepaugh-Sells Bros. Circus, owned by Lew and Peter Sells, James A. Bailey and W. W. Cole. And in letters about an inch and a half tall, heavy block letters, under the title Adam Forepaugh-Sells Bros. Famous United Shows these four names were in type about an inch and a half high, Lew and Peter Sells, James A. Bailey and W. W. Cole, Equal Owners. That ran on all the billboard paper for the show when the Forepaugh-Sells show was owned by those four fellows. This Martin Downs Cole Bros. Circus was highly successful and was a terrific money maker.

These harvest hands would start working in the morning at four o'clock and they would work at late as night as they could, trying to get the wheat threshed before the fall frost set in. The show cost possibly a couple of thousand a day, and maybe more, and every day they were wiring back \$3,100, \$3,400, \$3,000. Martin Downs said he would have to get back out on the show and help the boys handle all that money. Downs died. The show wintered at, I believe, a little town on



Sells & Downs Circus envelope used in 1903. It is printed in black and gold.

the New York Central Railroad between Erie and Buffalo, called Northeast, Pennsylvania. They wired to get winter quarters ready. There were a couple of patches on one of the buildings there, tar paper had blown off. The caretaker was heating a big iron pot of tar and he went out to get lunch. When he got back this tar had overflowed and set the building on fire and destroyed all the winter quarters. A radiator works had given up their headquarters in Conneaut, Ohio nearby, so the officials very quickly arranged to ship the show into winter quarters there. In a few weeks the show was advertised for sale, said it would be auctioned off piece by piece, all the animals, equipment, wagons and so forth, with the circus.

At that time it seemed that everybody in the circus business was interested. Some wanted to buy an elephant, some wanted to buy . . . (in fact, even the Ringling Bros. were represented there, they wanted to buy some high school horses) and the show was auctioned off there at Erie and brought a sizeable amount of money. That ended the famous Cole Bros. Circus. The title was later picked up by Adkins and Terrell when I suggested it to them in Rochester, Indiana, when they went out the spring of 1935.

Fred B. Hutchinson was the nephew, and his brother Charles Hutchinson, was a nephew by marriage of James A. Bailey. For some reason, Mr. Bailey did not want them to take any part of his inheritance after he passed away. He told his attorney to draw up his will stating that he didn't want either of the boys to get any part of it. Fred ran into a banker's daughter in Parkersburg, West Virginia, and afterwards married and settled down there. In later years, he was the general manager of the

Sells-Floto Circus, owned by Tammen & Bonfils of Denver; Colorado, the owners of the *Denver Post*. The treasurer of the Floto show at the time told me, "I've studied and watched Fred Hutchinson in every possible way, but I never caught him stealing a nickel from the circus."

Irving Polack started in show business as a carnival man. He and his

brother operated Polack Bros. Carnival. They ran that for a few years, about a twenty car show, and then sold out. Irving got in the northwest and became affiliated with a partner. They put out the Polack Bros. Indoor Circus. Instead of playing under tents, they'd play a building. At that time, the Shrine Clubs throughout the country started sponsoring circuses for the Crippled Children's Hospital, and Polack got in early with the various Shrine clubs and Temples throughout the Northwest. They initially confined their activities principally to the west coast, but later had two units, east and west.

One winter I put in the winter months as a press agent for the Polack circus. They came to Memphis for the Shrine Temple. I was a member of the Shrine there and I joined out with them. Their press agent was leaving the after next town which was Little Rock, Arkansas. I stayed with them all winter. Polack's partner was Louis Stern, "Pan," they called him as a nickname, who handled the office. In every town Polack's great failure was gambling. In every town he would get into a crap game, or if the show was on the road, he would go down and get ahold of property men and anybody else interested, and go down in the basement of the building and start a crap game. In these cities, I'm talking about Seattle, Portland, Sacramento, and so forth, he would leave town owing these gamblers quite a bit of money. So they would certainly wait for the show to come in back and they'd hook him again.

Polack would get into a town and have a fight with every sponsor when he got in, and he'd leave it to Louie to straighten them out. He would say, "Pay no attention to the man." After which, Polack would go down to his hotel, after he pulled one of these windings, and he'd be knocked out for a day or two. told him in Amarillo,



Fred Buchanan, the Granger, Iowa showman.

Texas, "Why don't you forget all that stuff, you're going to have headaches in the circus business. It's a highly complicated business, and you're going to have encounters, so take it easy and relax, don't battle with them at all." However, right up until his death, he used to battle with these different fellows.

Fred Buchanan was a master showman. He operated a vaudeville house in Des Moines, Iowa. He leaned toward the circus and put out a circus one year calling it Buchanan Bros. Big One Ring Circus. They used mules for motor power, pulling the dead axle wagons over the country. He never knew how bad business was. He got in a town up in South Dakota, and in the afternoon a gentleman came out who was very immaculately dressed. He had brown shoes, a brown cravat, brown hose, and says, "Mr. Buchanan, I'm a magician. I've been playing the Spielberg Time up here in the Dakotas and I heard your show was here today and managed to get here. I want to get a job as a side show manager. I'm a magician, put on a magic act, and Punch and Judy, and all that, with my principal part of the project is the fact that I know how to turn them into the side show." "Well," he [Buchanan] said, "You see that man in his shirt-sleeves out there on the bally platform. He's our side show manager. He painted up the show and he's been with us for a long time and I can't run him away to place you." So that afternoon about five o'clock, back came this ma-

gician again. "Mr. Buchanan, I really hate to bother you again, but I pretty near exhausted myself getting over here to join your show, and I wish you'd at least give me a chance to show you what I can do." Buchanan called the side show manager down and introduced him to him, and said, "This professor here, the magician, is up against it financially and we'll put him on for a while and let him take over and we'll see what he can do. You've got plenty of activities around the show to keep you busy."

Fred said he never knew how tough business was until he watched this side show manager day by day. He could really turn them into the side show tent with his dice box out on the platform, and pulling money out of a boy's ears and nose and what not. One day they were tearing down and a quarter pole fell on his [the magician's] derby hat and crushed his hat. Fred says "I watched him carefully from then on; then his shoes began to run down at the heels, and one day his elbow was all worn out. It wasn't too long before he looked like the rest of us." About this time, he says, "our advance man flew the coop and ran away from us. I had nobody up ahead of us, so I got ahold of a mounted electrotape I had there, pitching the inside of a three ring circus in full blast operation. I gave it to this magician and says, 'You are an all around showman, I want you to help me out. I want you to go to Pipestone, Minnesota, put this ad in the paper with the reading matter around it, and then have two thousand heralds struck off, advertising with this picture in the center about the big circus coming to Pipestone on August 12. When you get all finished, send me a wire and I'll tell you where to go to from there.'"

He says, "That particular day, here came the sheriff out with an attachment and tied up our whole show. We couldn't move a peg." About then, here came a wire in from Pipestone, Minnesota and the wire read, "Everything okay, Buchanan Bros. Circus, Pipestone, Thursday, August 12. They have me in jail now, please get me out." Fred says, "I hated that very much, but we didn't have a dime. We started in a day or two. The sheriff got tired of feeding these mules, so we started on back to Des Moines, Iowa."

He says, "I lived about forty miles from Des Moines in Granger. These wagons in what I called my circus were stored over there, forty miles onto the end of a trac-

tion line out of Des Moines. One cold blizzard day in January I was sitting in front of the cold fire place in my home reading the *Des Moines Register*. I could hear this blizzard outside, I thought I heard a knock at the door." Buchanan says, "I got up and opened the door and who do you reckon I saw there--nobody at all except my old side show manager, the magician. 'Well,' I says, 'come on in and get out of the cold and warm up.'"

The magician came in and he says, "Mr. Buchanan, I rode the traction line out here to your winter quarters today. I came out here to see if you boys are going on the road this coming year, and if you are, I want to be with you."

"Oh, yes," he says, "we're going to open on April 24th down at Perry, Iowa."

"Well, how about me getting placed again, Mr. Buchanan?"

Fred says, "Well now, Professor, what will you want now?"

The magician spoke up and says, "The same as last year." Which, of course, was nothing except what he could get out of the sale of these Punch and Judy whistles and the sale of these magic books.

So Fred says, "Well, be down here about a week before we open; get your stands all fixed up so we can hit the road over in Perry, Iowa." And away they went.

Ernest Haag started out with a little

Ernest Haag, well known wagon show owner.





Al G. Barnes, "The Master Showman."

nake show on a dead-axle wagon. The little tent was on the wagon with the poles and the stakes and a box of snakes. He traveled mostly in Louisiana, playing with carnivals and fairs, and anywhere they could catch a picnic or something. He and his wife slept on the ground underneath the wagon. They started from there and went on and on and up until they finally had a fairly good sized wagon show. Then he decided to go out on rails. He put on a ten or twelve car railroad show. George Moyer was the general agent. He took the show up into the Maritime Provinces of Canada, up through Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and so forth, and he made a great success of the show. Moyer was with them for several years and finally he was hired by Murgivan and Bowers as general agent of the John Robinson Circus. Ernest had no general agent, so he decided to retire from the railroad equipment, sell it off and open up again under canvas as a wagon show, which he operated quite a number of years to great success. He died and was buried the same day.

Al G. Barnes was born near London, Ontario. He got mixed up with a young girl there and they had him in jail. He and some other fellows escaped from jail and came down into the United States. I believe I was his first press agent, which was the season of 1912. At this particular time he had a twenty-two car show. He joined out with an

agent in Seattle, Washington named William K. Beck, who had been with the Forepaugh-Sells. show. They would travel with a carnival about four days a week and they would have two off days playing those small towns in western Canada, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta. Beck suggested that they would go into a town called Cranbrook, British Columbia. He said he took an opera company in there one day and they got \$800, sold out every seat in the house. They took the circus in there for one day. It was a carnival, but they had a big wild animal act with the show, which Barnes worked himself. His wife sold the tickets--and they had a very big day there, and Barnes says, "To hell with the carnival, I don't want no more of them." So he went out the next year out of Spokane, Washington, called it the Al G. Barnes Circus. The year I joined them, I believe, was the second year he was out. I joined them down at Venice, California, down on the ocean front from Los Angeles.

I had previously had been working on the newspaper in Memphis, Tennessee as a reporter. When I got out of college, Duke University, I worked on newspapers in Memphis. I ended up on the *Commercial Appeal*, and the last story I wrote for them, they put on the front page with the byline: By Floyd King. I wrote about a Rock Island train being held up across the bridge from Memphis in Arkansas. The bank robbers had blown open the safe and got the money and their blowing open the safe had set the baggage car on fire and destroyed the baggage car. I rode across

the bridge over into Arkansas with the city police. I rode on the front of a switch engine across over there to where this train had been held up, and I walked the rest of the night with the police, looking for these bank robbers. I went back to Memphis on the boat that floated Rock Island freight trains across and I got back to Memphis about daylight, pretty well knocked out.

I was with the Barnes Circus forty weeks, I opened with them in Los Angeles and I closed with them at El Paso, Texas during the fall of the year. I had some correspondence with R. M. Harvey, who was general agent of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. I met Harvey in Chicago one Sunday morning at the Wellington Hotel and we walked over to the National Printing Company. He had a key to the door and a small office was assigned for various agents for circuses. They could come up there and use the Underwood typewriter in this little office. So Harvey and I discussed the proposition of me being the press agent for the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. I asked them why they had changed press agents every year or so for the last several years. Harvey said they had been trying to get somebody to please them. Well, I went over there and I stayed five or six years as general press agent, and every year they gave me a raise. They were wonderful fellows to work for, very appreciative fellows, Charlie Corey and Mr. Wallace, and the various owners of the show of the times: Ed Ballard, who was a very high class gentleman from the word go.

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CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONVENTION

**CHICAGO (Northbrook), ILLINOIS
JUNE 5 TO 7**

1931

By the spring of 1931 Christy was scratching for any way of making money. The March 7, 1931 *Billboard* contained this ad: "Christy Bros. Circus for rent. 20 cars complete. Will rent to reliable parties for season. Everything from stakes to parade. Painted and repaired ready to open. Animals, elephants, horses, even paper if wanted. Southern Show Equipment Co. South Houston, Texas." He had no takers, but was successful in renting tents around Houston.

Although no record can be found it would appear that the South Houston property was in Mrs. Christy's name, thus placing it beyond the reach of creditors of the circus.

By this time Christy's younger brother Harold was active with him. Christy wrote: "When my kid brother was around seventeen I brought him to the show and started him learning the circus business. From the first lesson on he showed great interest. I started him on the big top, with the boss canvasman Harry Sells. He quickly understood all about erecting the big tents. He then went to the blacksmith department where he received his horse shoeing and repair education. Thence down to the train runs, where he learned to be ready to load the wagons, chock them so they would withstand the bumps and rattling of the train without moving. He learned to pole the wagons up the steel runs onto the flat cars. He learned the art of laying out a lot, that is staking out the various tents and placing the front entrance in the most important spot on the lot.

"All this while he was getting basic big top training now that he had the manual part of the operation in hand. He still had a set of six or eight horse lines in his hands and guided that many horses through each city in the big parade.

"Brother Harold was just a kid, but he soon had all the education needed so that he could jump in and do about any job that needed a quick replacement. When in winter quarters there were many new horses to be trained. So Harold Christy was designated to become a helper in the training barns. In no time he became very interested in one special white horse named Boy. So I allowed him to start in our big menage

CHRISTY and His WONDER SHOW

PART FIVE

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

horse act. He rode Boy and broke him to do a beautiful side passage, which he used in parade. All that season he was assistant to Merritt Belew, our number one horse trainer, who presented a twelve horse act. We had three of these acts, one palominos, one all whites and one with blacks and white spots.

"Harold began working the spotted act. After we closed the big railroad show and took out a Shrine circus unit of acts, Harold was featured with a beautiful hind leg horse that played a pair of cymbals attached to his fore legs."

1932

Christy continued to rent tents around Houston in 1932, including one to the University of Houston, 140 feet by 250 feet in size. In February he furnished a 110 by 180 foot big top to replace the one owned by the Richey Evangelistic Temple which had been destroyed by fire. He staged a parade with elephants and lead stock to advertise that Richey services would continue as usual.

Christy recalled: "The first Houston Fat Stock show was held in that year. J. W. Sartwell was the president. He contracted with me to present the entertainment, a circus performance with elephants, horse acts, dog and goat acts, aerialists, and clowns. It took place in the old Democratic convention

The Christy elephant act was booked at fairs and Shrine circuses after the circus closed. Pfening Archives.

building. There were very few head of stock, some poultry, pigs and sheep. The Christy circus was the main attraction, at 25 cents admission. We were to present two shows a day, and we did just that. The total contract was to be, believe it or not, \$600 for ten days. During the engagement we drew about half of this amount. This first fat stock show was far from profitable. Business was bad. By

the day before the last performance I realized I had better get my balance of \$300. So I demanded payment and was told I would be paid the next day from funds that were at some uptown office. However I insisted, 'pay me now, or no show.'

"I instructed my equestrian director, Merritt Belew, not to start the performance until I blew the proper whistle signal after I received the balance of our pay. Once again I went up stairs to Mr. Sartwell's office. By then the audience was stomping and whistling for the show to start. It was already past the starting time. I insisted that I had to have my money before I would start the show, or no show. Everyone in the office was nervous, they finally said ok. I received two checks for \$150 each. I was paid off and hurried down stairs to start the performance. But on my way down I met Howard West, a director of the fat stock show. I said, 'how are things Howard.' He was feeling kinda peculiar and slapped me on the back and said, 'Bad Christy, we are out of money. We are out of money, but we fooled 'em today. We gave everyone checks for their prize money, and the checks are not worth a damn.' Howard did not know that the other fellows had just given me two of those checks. So back up the stairs I went. I laid the checks on the table and said, 'Cash these checks.'

They gave me the usual alibis; however, I said again no cash no show. By then the audience was really hot and raising cane for the show to start.

They finally scraped around and raised the money in small bills and cashed the checks. Then the show went on. So the first chapter of the Houston Fat Stock Show was completed. Today I would venture they could cash a check for about any amount. Those pioneers were hard workers. They have all passed away. A circus at bargain prices, 25 cents and \$600 for a week



and a half of the entire personnel."

In the early 1930s Hagenbeck-Wallace booked a unit of elephants and horses on winter Shrine dates. Christy picked up on this and put together similar circus units to play fairs and independent dates. Brother Harold was in charge of this activity.

While not on the road the Christy elephants were allowed to graze in a field along the highway between Houston and Beaumont. Motorists traveling the heavily used road were startled to see them.

While he was driving his car on a fishing trip it slipped off the road and went into a ditch near Alvin, Texas. Wife Laura Christy was pinned underneath the car and severely injured. She died on April 15 at Memorial Hospital in Houston. He was treated for scalp wounds and released.

Christy expressed his grief in a May 6 letter to his friend Karl K. Knecht: "I have lost the only thing on earth that meant anything to me when my Dear Pal passed away.

"We have a beautiful burial plot near the entrance of the finest cemetery here, Forest Lawn . . . and it is located real close to the Christy estate . . . so I can see her every time I go anywhere. I propose to have a great marble elephant carved for our plot.

"As you say in your letter everything is in No. 1 condition excepting the train. The show is all intact and will go when there is something to go after, no use chasing rainbows . . . with good money. Next year things in our business will be much better, but much worse this year.

"After a new president and things get set so everyone knows now they will be for the next four years.

"We had 13 elephants originally with the two circuses. We have most of the animals out on rentals, excepting the largest elephants, some camels, bears, lions, hay animals and plenty of ring stock still here.

"I must now take a partner for next season as I can't handle this big show alone."

In June this article appeared in the *Billboard*: "Word has been received from G. W. Christy, of Houston, Texas, that he is planning to again have out a big show next season and have a partner as assistant.

"Two units from the Christy quarters are now on the road and a third is being lined up." The partner failed to materialize as nothing happened,



The Lee Bros. Circus pole semi-trailer Pfening Archives.

By early November Harold Christy had returned all units to quarters after playing forty weeks on the road. The dates were probably fairs and parks. These units most likely traveled by railroad baggage car.

1933

Christy began getting nibbles for the sale of his railroad circus. He wrote a Warren Corry of Morristown, New Jersey on February 23, 1933 on a Southern Show Equipment Company letterhead: "Replying to your letter regarding circus equipment: We have a fifteen car circus in first class shape kept in a good building at all times since out of use.

"Have no flat cars at present but have all kinds of sleepers and six brand new steel elephant and stock cars seventy foot long. You can lease steel flats, I can arrange that for you. Have an advance car with possum belly lockers. I have plenty of loading runs, steel ones all sizes. Have a dandy ticket wagon made so it can go in a parade and look the part. One good electric light wagon, opens all around for air and to work on. Have one 4 KW light plant. However there are three large generators here in Houston that can be bought right.

"Have a 26 foot pole wagon, a dandy with eight inch wheels. Have five cage dens, two small, three large. The original Christy Bros. range wagon with big battle ship range built in. This wagon, with eight inch wheels, opens all around and makes a kitchen. Original Christy Bros. canvas wagon, none better ever built. It has eight inch wheels and has a loading boom for canvas. Have Christy plank wagon. Property wagon with steel arena on side. Christy band tableau with sea shell carvings.

"Have big blue tableau for wardrobe, it has life sized carved figures on each side and half figures in center. Have steam calliope wagon with instrument. Small blue tableau that was No. 1 band wagon on Golden show. It is built of red wood and is in perfect shape. It has three large diamond shaped mirrors on each side. Water wagon etc., in all 25 wagons and all in good shape ready to

go. Will sell the ten car show less the flats, that is the above and one sleeper, one advance, one stock car for ten thousand dollars if bought in the next sixty days.

"I am making this price low to clean up all the circus property in the building now to

make room for other use. Have some harness like new as well as a lot of wardrobe. No air calliopes, we have two here but neither is in shape, both need overhauling so don't want to offer them. In fact I will give them to you along with the air calliope wagon if you buy the show."

In 1933 Christy revived his association with carnival promoter and Hawaiian showman E. K. Fernandez and took a circus unit to the islands. He also booked his animals on a circus unit playing Shrine dates.

After his success in handling the animal units Harold Christy talked his brother into operating an under canvas circus, this time on trucks.

The news broke in the May 13 *Billboard*: "Houston's newest circus under the guidance of George W. and Harold A. Christy, will open next Friday. Twenty-five brand-new trucks will transport the outfit. It will be under the direct management of H. A. Christy.

"The entire outfit was built in Christy Bros. winter quarters during the past winter. All rolling equipment is painted a brilliant red and orange. All the equipment is standardized with dual wheeled trucks. In addition to the trucks there are 10 special-built 25-foot trailers that will have dual wheels and can carry the many horses and wild animals. The large elephant, Alice, will be transported in a chariot trailer, while two smaller elephants will be carried in another trailer.

"Other animals will include two camels, one zebra, one ostrich, one emu, three reindeer, two zebras, two lions, one jaguar and two hyenas, filling 15 cages. Some of the beautiful and rare birds in quarters will be carried. Twenty-five Shetland ponies will be used and 16 horses, including the famous black and white 12-horse liberty act from the former Christy show. Three dog acts, two goat acts; a new midget pony act, using beautiful spotted dwarf ponies, will be featured for the kiddies.

"Two large electric plants will be carried. The big top is a 110 foot round with three 40 foot middles. Menagerie is a 70 with four 30s. It will house the

side show acts. A sound truck, equipped with the latest broadcast facilities, will be used for special daily advertising and big show announcements.

"The big show performance will be under the direction of Merritt Belew. Among others with the show will be the Woods family of aerialists, the Wilsons, Tom Bryan, Nita Belew and Clarence Shelton.

"Manager Christy stated that the admission prices will be in keeping with the times. Title of the show is undetermined at this time due to the fact that several tons of paper now on hand will probably be used, this paper includes Lee Bros., Heber Bros., Texas Shows and the original Christy Bros. Circus. It is possible that Harold Bros. Trained Wild animal Shows will be the ultimate title."

The Lee Bros. title was selected and the opening date was set for May 12, however, it did not open until May 22 in Galveston, Texas. The June 3 *Billboard* reported on the opening: "Galveston, Texas, May 27. G. W. Christy opened his Lee Bros. Trained Animal Shows, motorized, here Monday. Approximately 2,800 people were at the matinee. The show moved to Houston for a four-day run.

"The program is presented in three rings and on two platforms, and moves in a snappy manner under the direction of Merritt Belew. A spec, on the order of *Noah and the Ark*, opens the performance. The acts follow in order:

"Ponies, presented by Belew, Nona Barry and Fairy Woods. Woods and Barry families in endurance feats. Trained goats, worked by Gertie Thomas. Performing canines by Nita Belew, Gertie Thomas and Nona Barry. Elephants, zebra and camel, presented by Gertie Thomas. Clown number, principal fun makers being Dave Green, LeRube Clarke and Glen Woods. Goats and dogs. Christy's dancing horses, presented by Gertie Thomas, Nita Belew, Sylvia Barry and Merritt Belew. Big aerial number, in which the Woods and Barry families share honors. Nita Belew with goats; Merritt Belew, pigs, and Francis Conley, dogs. Barrys and Woods on the wire. D'Artez, known as 'Twisto.'

Twelve-horse liberty act, by Merritt Belew. Clowns. Baby bulls, Gertie Thomas; performing zebra, Nita Belew, and camels, Merritt Belew. Dee Woods in a wire number. Mixed groups of ponies, dogs, monkeys and goats, by Nona, Nita and Sylvia. Clowns and concert announcement. Football horses. Man- age number. Bucking mules. A big cat act was called off at the last moment, arena equipment not arriving in time.

"Side show, under management of Chester Gregory, houses the menagerie. Platform acts include Lee Bros. Minstrels; Don Carlos, magician; Otis Laberta and Gladys Mann, impale- ment; Mabel Clark and Betty Davis, dancers; Marveque, working untamable lion; D. Donnell, swords. Two pit shows are carried and are looked after by Ruth Reno in addition to her other duties. A. Reno is assistant manager. Bands under the direction of W. J. Jackson and Rogers have fourteen pieces and doubles in the big and side show.

"The staff: G. W. Christy, owner; H. A. Christy, superintendent; C. M. Bowman, general agent; Joe Haworth, legal adjuster; Gertie Thomas, secretary; Merritt Belew, equestrian director; Ben R. Jones and L. M. Shaver, in charge of front door; Chester Gregory, side show manager; T. J. Lovett, in charge of tickets and Jack Alson, master mechanic."

With cooch dancers in the side show and Joe Haworth as fixer it appears there was grift on the show.

Things did not go well from the start. Lee Bros. had lost the scheduled opening day in Goose Creek on account of an electrical storm. At the first date in Galveston Frances Conley was injured. Following a second day in Galveston the circus went back to Houston. On the run to Houston Betty Matthews was seriously injured and was left in a hospital. At Houston three men were put out of the program with bucking mules.

Lee Bros. played four Houston locations starting on May 23. On the run to Marshall on May 27 one of the performing zebras was killed when working men were watering the stock and

Lee Bos. Circus on a lot in 1934. Pfening Archives.

in Paris a performing camel was lost in another storm.

Christy closed the show on June 2 in Paris, Texas and took it back to the barn, saying he wanted to "shake the jinx." He also said he wanted to have heavier trucks and do some re-routing. After these setbacks it was decided to bring it back to the barn. Christy said the show had average to good business at all stands, but it was "simply too heavy." He had to learn the motorized circus business.

The July 1 *Billboard* reported: "The management of Lee Bros. Circus, motorized, which recently returned to winter quarters, to reorganize, probably will not resume its tour this season. Show, it is said, was to have been reorganized.

"Several railroad cars have been leased to the Bill Hames Shows. Some animal acts and equipment are being contracted with motorized outfits on the road. G. W. Christy has booked several grandstand acts at fairs, and considerable tent equipment and seats have been let for various coming events." Christy probably called this another bloomer.

On December 2 a fire originating in a railroad-owned box car on one of the Christy spur tracks damaged five circus cars. Seven men were painfully burned in fighting the outbreak. Harold Christy was quoted as saying that some tramps had been cooking in the system car and the flames quickly spread to the circus train. For a time it appeared that two of the animal barns were doomed, but they escaped with only a scorching.

No animals were damaged, as most of the stock had been transferred to the lower barns. Practically all of the original Christy stock and animals were in the Hawaiian Islands playing for E. K. Fernandez. Harold Christy had arrived at quarters in late November with a Christy unit after playing a string of fall indoor dates.

1934

While playing a Shrine date with his liberty and elephant act in Hamilton, Ontario, Christy met a beautiful dietitian and horsewoman named Elizabeth Bryce Donaldson. He later married the her.



Continuing his tent rental business Christy erected a huge tent over the site where the San Jacinto monument was built. Christy tentage was also used at the Houston Fat Stock show as well as at a walkathon in east Texas. He again furnished a circus with all the equipment for E. K. Fernandez in Hawaii.

Little was heard about taking the Lee trucks out for the 1934 season. The February 10 *Billboard* revealed: "Although there is polite silence on the part of the Christy brothers, George and Harold, and secretary Gertrude Thomas the *Billboard* has information that at least one of their circuses will take the road early, moving on trucks that are now being readied in quarters. The title of this show will probably be Lee Bros., as there is considerable Lee paper still on hand.

"Also there is the possibility of Christy Bros. again playing old territory, on not less than a 25 car show. The Christys have three complete railroad shows, namely, Christy Bros., Lee Bros. and Texas Ranch; also the motorized show known last season as Lee Bros., which title if used this year would leave the Heber Bros. title and paper for the other outfit.

"Parade equipment, tents, lights, seats are in first class shape and ready for use on short notice, and the railway cars require little work."

On March 10 Christy added five motor trucks. A new custom-built advance truck had been received. A shipment of animals arrived in quarters. It was announced that the Lee title would again be used and that daily parades were planned.

By early April general agent J. C. Admire and a crew of billers were blazing the trail for the coming of Lee Bros. World's Largest 25 cent Wild Animal Shows. Special parade tableau trucks had been completed for the parade. Considerable privately-owned stock and animals, traveling in their own trucks, would bring the fleet to about 50 trucks. The opening date was set for April 28 in Henderson, Texas.

Christy, who had always involved himself in physical activities in quarters and on the road, proceed to injure himself while showing an employee how to adjust a winter quarters rip saw. A middle finger was severed at the second joint and a third finger was severed at the end. Blood poisoning necessitated further amputation, but the surgeon had hopes that the mangled hand and fingers would heal.

Following the opening the show moved to Greenville, Texas. On May 3 it was in Ada, Oklahoma. Moving east

Coming Saturday
Lee Bros.
Big 3-Ring
WILD ANIMAL
CIRCUS

A herd of elephants . . . lions, tigers, leopards . . . beasts of the jungle and plains . . . A fleet of 80 trucks carries this great show to the Jordan Lot a mile west of Henderson at the edge of Cincinnati where it will be presented to the people . . .

1934
Saturday Afternoon and Night, April 28
FREE TICKETS FOR THE SHOW
 Through the Courtesy of Henderson Merchants and
 The Henderson Daily News
SEE DETAILS THURSDAY'S AND FRIDAY'S NEWS



Newspaper ad used by Lee Bros. Circus in 1934. Ted Bowman collection.

Lee Bros. played Joplin, Missouri on May 10. By May 19 J. C. Admire had left to join Schell Bros., another Texas outfit. He was replaced by Al Clarkson as general agent.

The show played Vandalia, Illinois on May 23 and remained in that state until June 1. Following stands in Indiana Lee entered Ohio at Troy on June 19. It stayed in Ohio until July 5.

Little was published about Lee Bros. until June 15 when the circus played New Castle, Indiana. It was by then traveling on thirty trucks and had three elephants. Jerry Burell and his wild west troupe had joined to have the concert. Felix Morales and his family also were added to the performance. O. A. Gilson brought his ten piece band to the show.

The most complete report of the season appeared in the July 14 *Billboard*: "Massillon, Ohio, July 7. After many weeks of spotty business Lee Bros. three-ring circus has been in the money the last three weeks, the first profit since the opening at Houston late in April, executives informed a representative of the *Billboard*. The show since opening experienced unusually poor business in the Middle West, owing to the drought, and after entering Indiana there was a decided pickup. Ohio has proved good territory, Wooster being big. There was half-filled matinee here with about three-fourths at night and a fair day's business was experienced at Alliance on July 4, the last Ohio stand before the show entered Western Pennsylvania.

"Executives are devoting much effort to revamping and enlarging the show, which now is almost twice its original

size. Much new canvas is in evidence, including a new and larger padroom. New sidewall is coming on shortly and more seats go in within a few days. The big show program has been bolstered with the addition of a half-dozen acts, including the Felix Morales family. Motor equipment is in excellent shape, the outfit is moving on 25 trucks, in addition to many trailers and private cars. Big top is a 100-foot round top with three 40s, and the side show an 80 with three 30s. A parade is given with mostly mounted riders and miniature animal cages drawn by ponies. O. A. Gilson has an excellent 12-piece band. Dime Wilson is producing clown and is assisted by a half-dozen joeys who have worked up some novel walkarounds.

"The program here, under the direction of Merritt Belew and running an hour and 35 minutes, was as follows: Tournament, riders, band, performers, ponies, three elephants and a camel. Comedy acrobats in three rings, with Felix Morales in center concluding with 50 somersaults on trampoline. Ponies in all three rings. Single traps, Lillian Wilson. Clowns; swinging ladders, Misses Ellington, Wilson and Dorothy Voss. Revolving ladder, Miss Iva, center ring; dogs in two rings, worked by Mrs. Belew and Gil Wilson; Thomas Moss, juggler, in third ring. Clowns' baseball. Solo elephants in all rings, presented by Homer Williams, Mrs. Belew and Kay Marlow. Wild west concert announcement. Leaps by the Blue Streaks, two youngsters who hold much promise, closing with going over eight ponies. Felix Morales' wire act, a neat turn with flashy wardrobe, closing with back somersault on wire. High-school horses, two in each ring, presented by Mr. and Mrs. Belew in center ring, and Miss Wilson and Fred Nelson and Kay Marlow in 1 and 3. Clown walkarounds. Iron jaw, by Ellington and Wilson. Eight liberty horses, presented by Mr. Belew in center ring—one of the outstanding spots on the program. Felix Morales' head slide from top of center pole. Clowns. Three elephants, presented by Dorothy Voss in center ring and closing on track. Bucking mule, elephants and horses in football kicking closed the show.

"Jerry Burell and his company of 10 cowboys and cowgirls and five Indians presented an entertaining concert. He has nine head of stock. Side show is under the management of Bill Heath, with William Peters and Chick Howell on ticket boxes. Lineup includes Jelly Roll Rodgers and his colored minstrel troupe; Mrs. Heath, snakes; To To, frog boy; Fred Zulong, 'African Savage'; Twisto, contortionist; Dorothy

Voss, Helen Fercheau and Miss Murphy, dancers; 17 cages of small animals, three elephants and the camel.

"Among the executives are Charles 'Butch' Cohen, general manager; Al Clarkson, general agent; Merritt Bellew, equestrian director; Fred Nelson, assistant equestrian director; O. A. Gilson, bandmaster; George 'Slim' Griffiths, big show tickets; Fred Shaffer, wardrobe; Fred Voss, master mechanic; 'Crickett,' big top canvas boss; Red Shelton, superintendent privileges; Ernest Dameron, front door and press."

It is interesting to note that Harold Christy's name did not appear as an official on the circus, although he was there.

On July 24 it went into West Virginia at Morgantown for five stands. The show then turned back west playing in Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois. By August 21 the Lee show was in Oklahoma.

By August 4 Felix Morales had left. George Christy was on the show for two weeks in August. There were many staff changes, Earl Combs was now manager. A new bannerline had been added and four new trucks and additional canvas had arrived. By all indications business had improved considerably after the circus arrived in the Midwest.

The route took the show south through Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama. These fall dates had been played over the years by Christy Bros. Lee Bros. closed the season at Columbus, Texas on November 10. The November 24 *Billboard* reported that Harold Christy announced that work would start on building for the next season. It was not to be. The Christy motorized circus toured no more.

1935

In 1935 the big news in the circus world was the organizing of Cole Bros., a new railroad circus, by Jess Adkins and Zack Terrell. The two veteran managers of Hagenbeck-Wallace and Sells-Floto made a trip to the South Houston Christy quarters in February to acquire additional equipment.

Christy had prepared this inventory of equipment on November 23, 1934 for Adkins and Terrell: No. 15 canvas wagon; No. 19 canvas wagon; No. 22 steam boiler wagon; No. 23 air calliope wagon; No. 24 plank wagon; No. 25 canvas wagon; No. 27 small tableau



George Christy and Jess Adkins after the sale of equipment to the new Cole Bros. Circus. Circus World Museum collection.

wagon; No. 30 property wagon; No. 33 water wagon; No. 37 canvas wagon; No. 44 blacksmith wagon; No. 47 canvas wagon; No. 54 plank wagon; No. 66 stringer wagon; No. 67 plank wagon; No. 76 light plant wagon; No. 80 tableau wagon; No. 84 plank wagon; No. 86 light plant wagon; No. 87 stringer wagon; No. 88 stringer wagon; No. 99 concession wagon; No. 100 wardrobe wagon; No. 105 big top canvas wagon, with boom; No. 106 canvas wagon with boom; No. 107 canvas wagon, with boom; No. 108 stake driver and equipment wagon; No. 110 water wagon; No. 2 advance car; No. 40 steel stock car; No. 41 steel stock car; No. 20 steel flat car; No. 44 steel stock car; No. 23 steel flat car; No. 28 steel flat car; No. 39 wooden sleeper; No. 29 steel flat car; No. 32 wooden sleeper; No. 25 steel flat car; No. 37 wooden sleeper; No. 27 steel flat car; No. 34 wooden sleeper; No. 29 steel flat car; No. 35 wooden sleeper; No. 24 steel flat car; No. 31 wooden sleeper; No. 26 steel flat car; No. 101 private sleeper; No. 43 steel stock car; No. 45 wooden flat car; No. 2 sleeper; No. 48 old wooden stock car; No. 27 old wooden flat car; No. 11 old wooden stock car; No. 22 steel flat car; six steel wagon runs; three Mack trucks; and about 15 sets of harness. Christy penciled a total price of \$22,000 on the sheet and set the sale price at \$25,000.

On December 30, 1934 Jess Adkins wrote Christy: "I am going to take you at your word in this proposition and will tell you what we will do. For the wagons, tractors, etc., that came in with the Christy show, not including canvas and seats, and including the six Mt. Vernon flats and one Mt. Vernon stock car, also whatever sleepers we could use up to five; which would also

include in addition to the above such items as wardrobe, side show equipment, electric light equipment, cookhouse equipment, harness and trapings. In other words, practically the whole show on the lot, excluding canvas and seats, we will give you twenty-five thousand dollars, ten thousand down, ten thousand June 1, and five thousand July 1. If you want cash maybe we could give it all to you, but would prefer ten down and the two payments.

"We are now going over the canvas we bought with the Robbins Bros. outfit, and as soon as we know what is there we will send you a list. No doubt you could use this whole outfit in your renting business." Christy accepted the \$25,000 offer and the terms Adkins outlined.

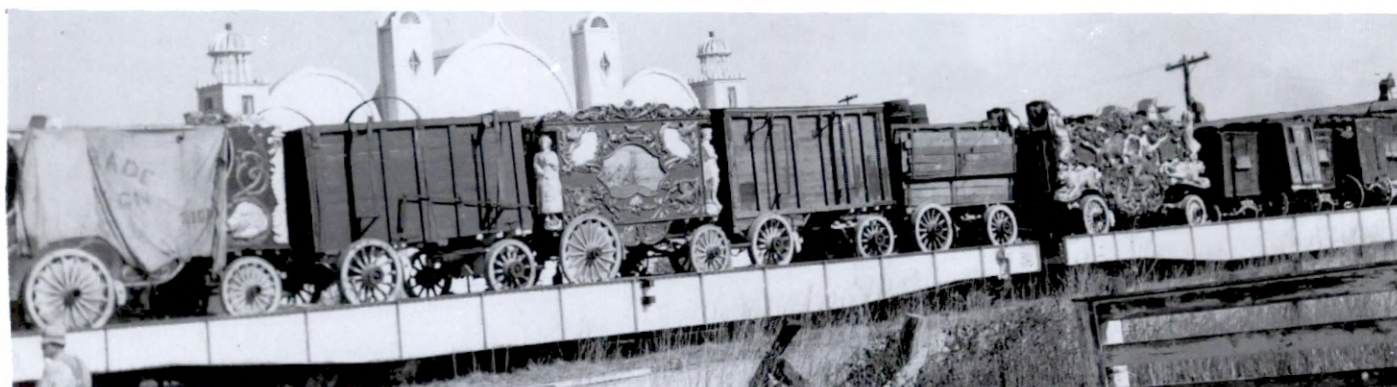
Adkins purchased forty wagons, including tableaux, cages, an air calliope, a steam calliope, two tractors and baggage wagons. Other wagons included: a ticket wagon, a generator wagon, a pole wagon, a canvas wagon, a water wagon with steel boom loader, a cookhouse wagon, a dog wagon, a 26 foot stringer wagon, a blacksmith wagon, two plank wagons, a property wagon, a jack wagon, a menagerie canvas wagon, and a stake and chain wagon.

The tableaux included America, Asia, Columbia, Lion and Mirror, a brown tableau that had been the Christy clown bandwagon and a yellow tableau with a dropped bottom, used to carry trunks. Two Mack Bulldog trucks and a Fordson tractor were also purchased.

Six cross cages and ten 12 foot, six inch cages were bought. The larger dens were the well known Tom Tucker cages built in the mid-1920s. Fifty sets of heavy baggage harness and thirty sets of pony harness and two Persian leopards, two spotted hyenas and one puma were part of the deal. Six Mt. Vernon flat cars and a Mt. Vernon stock car completed the deal.

On January 18 a former Gentry Bros. small ticket wagon was sold to Frank Walter for \$150. This wagon is now in the Hertzberg Museum in San Antonio.

Christy recalled his interest in buying the 101 Ranch Wild West Show: "After the 101 Ranch show closed in 1931 all of their equipment was sent back to their winter quarters in Marland, Oklahoma. Later I learned in 1935 that Lou Wentz of Ponca City,



Oklahoma held a mortgage on the ranch and all of its contents.

"I arranged to visit Wentz with a view of buying the 101. Since he had taken the physical equipment for part of a loan he had advanced the Miller brothers. While there we agreed on a cash price. I would purchase the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West Show. I intended to put it back on the road. I checked over the property with Mr. Wentz at the quarters. A few items were already disposed of, but most of it was intact. The train was on a spur at Marland. Zack Miller was the only brother left.

"I had to go back to Houston to get the funds to pay for the deal, but set a date when I would return to complete the transaction. When I returned with a cashiers check I was advised that Mrs. Zack Miller was very upset to learn the show was sold. Her husband was out of town. She claimed that the show was all they had left. I felt bad and sympathized with her. I just could not bring myself to go through with the deal. The show property was owned by Wentz. Mrs. Zack had no legal interest whatsoever in the show. I just did not want to be a party to anything that would hurt anyone. I told Wentz that I would have to forget the whole thing. I returned home. That was my experience with the 101 Ranch Wild West Show. The new Cole show later bought the Ranch elephants as well as some other equipment

Christy remembered: "In 1935 the University of Texas had a contract with the Navy to train a certain number of recruits in a certain period of time. They would have had to build a huge building on their grounds in Austin, but there was little time. The head of the project for the university called me to come over and talk about the possibility of using a circus tent on a rental basis. I was shown the grounds. It was full of big pine trees. The question was, could I erect a big tent 220 feet long and about 130 feet wide over a lot of stumps. I said I would do it. Work started immediately. They were

The train load of Christy equipment ready to leave South Houston for Rochester, Indiana. Pfening Archives.

going to build a two story building under the tent. The interior of the tent was hung with flood lights for the night crews. All went well until the electricians started running conduit. They punched holes in the canvas. The winds ripped these places further. The brick work was going up. We kept raising the side wall for the high parts of the building. In due time the work had progressed to the place we could remove the tent. It had plenty of holes. Now I had to get the center and quarter poles down. The poles were sealed in and there was no way to get them out. We finally had to cut the entire tent down. It was a total loss. You can't win all ways."

In June of 1935 Christy hit it big outside the circus business when oil was discovered two blocks from his home. While only a few acres of his property were leased, the oil royalties were sufficient to keep the wolf away from Christy's door for many years. Christy went to New York to close the deal, accompanied by his secretary, Gertrude Thomas, who was appearing with one of the Christy circus units then playing in the East. During his stay in New York he booked and placed several thousand seats for a regatta in Beaumont. Mrs. Thomas also had holdings in the oil field area of South Houston.

In September of 1935 Christy leased three elephants to Harley Sadler for his Bailey Bros. Circus for the remainder of the season. Gertrude Thomas presented the act. In late November several Lee Bros. trucks left for Iowa to play winter dates.

1936

Christy wrote: "The first Shrine Circus in Houston was promoted by my good friend Bob Morton. I enticed him to try Houston as it was a fertile field and my home town. We looked the old convention hall over as a possible site for the first show. It was a tremendous

structure. We scanned the possibility of staging the circus in three rings on the center floor. It immediately looked impossible from the standpoint of the terrible distance from the rings to the seats. Folks just would be too far from the show. There was no other building available at that time.

"It was then that I suggested erecting a big circus tent inside the building and use our circus seats. The plan was adopted. This was another of my firsts in circus business. We also had a complete carnival set up around the big top. It was really not too much fun erecting a circus with seats on a solid cement floor."

On January 4, 1936 Christy sold one emu, one Siki deer, one emu banner and a stake puller for \$85 to Frank Walter. On January 8 he sold Walter twenty-five Shetland ponies, three cookhouse tables and twenty-five tent stakes.

After gutting his railroad circus with the sale of equipment to Adkins and Terrell he offered additional circus property for sale in January. An ad appeared in the January 18 *Billboard* offering: "15 car circus, parade wagons, light plants, all steel elephant horse and 70 foot box cars, calliopes. Complete circus except live stock. Bargain for cash. 4 horse liberty act with new trappings ready to work, only \$700; practically new steel arena, \$300; Menage horse doing extra good specialty, \$200, Fourteen truck show animal cages with special 24 foot trailer and Chevrolet truck, only \$350. Swell dog wagon on General Motors truck, only \$75. Two advance Chevrolet trucks \$100 each. Cookhouse truck on Chevrolet, \$100. 4 K. W. light plant, \$150. Extra large reindeer, big antlers, performs act and does Santa Claus walkaround, with harness and sleigh, \$350."

On February 11 western movie actor Ken Maynard went to South Houston and bought equipment for his new wild west show. The bill of sale, from the Robert F. Slatzer Collection, read: "The State of Texas, County of Harris.

"That I, Geo. W. Christy of the county of Harris and the State afore said, for and inconsideration of the sum of Eleven Thousand Five Hundred dollars to me in hand paid by Ken Maynard the receipt for which is hereby acknowledged, have BARGAINED, SOLD and DELIVERED, and these presents do BARGAIN, SELL and DELIVER unto the said Ken Maynard of the County of Los Angeles and State of California the following described personal property in Harris County, Texas, to-wit:

The above mentioned property shall consist of:

- Two pairs steel train loading runs.
- Set of run jacks.
- Set of wagon chocks for train.
- Pullover ropes, snub ropes, hooks, torches etc.
- Train plates for loading wagons to go between flats.
- Ten sets of circus baggage harness.
- Lot of circus baggage horse collars.
- Camel harness.
- Lot of saddles.
- One reindeer with harness and sleigh.
- Train bedding, blankets, sheets, pillows, slips, etc.
- Cash registers for candy stands, front door etc.
- Cook house tables, seats, boxes, etc.
- Reserve seat ticket boxes and side show boxes.
- Blacksmith outfit, forge, anvil, drill press, etc.
- Four horse Liberty act, black and white spots with trappings.
- One extra menage horse, doing specialty.
- Steel animal arena.
- Lot of lion props, arena pedestals etc.
- Goat act, consisting of three goats, one high wire walking goat.
- Four-KW light plant.
- Old water wagon.
- No.1 Bandwagon, Ringling Brothers Famous Swan bandwagon.
- No. 2 Shell band tableau [former Eschman].
- No. 3 Wardrobe tableau, mirrors on each side.
- No. 4 Ticket wagon. Drop bottom type, seat on top for parade.
- No. 5 Large Blue tableau [Beauty]. Life size carvings each corner and center, drop bottom type.
- No. 6. Band tableau with mirrors and carvings on sides [Orchestmelchor].
- No. 7. Air calliope wagon with scrolls on sides [from Lee Bros.].
- No. 8. Steam calliope, 20 whistle instrument complete, except boiler.
- No. 9. Monkey cage.
- No. 10 Lion cage.



Some of the wagons bought by Ken Maynard lined up in the Christy winter quarters. Pfening Archives.

- No. 11 Cage.
 - No. 12 Cage.
 - No. 13 Cage
 - No. 14 Water wagon, steel tank 13 feet.
 - No. 15 Canvas wagon, drop bottom 18 feet.
 - No. 16 Arena wagon, and steel arena.
 - No. 17 Seat plank wagon.
 - No. 18 Light plant wagon.
 - No. 19 Jack wagon and stable or harness makers end.
 - No. 20 Stake and chain wagon.
 - No. 21 Cook house range wagon, with Battleship range.
 - No. 22 Ringling show cage with life size images on corners for hay animals [probably Barnum and London Whiskers].
 - No. 23 Old Christy show water wagon, wooden tank.
- Signed by Geo. W. Christy and Ken Maynard February 11, 1936. Notary Public Pearle Harris."
- The above list of equipment does not include the stock cars. They may have been on a separate bill of sale.
- The equipment was shipped to San Diego, California on Southern Pacific system flats. The Maynard show did not last long. A November 17, 1936 inventory listed the value of wagons from the Christy at \$3,510. All of the wagons were sold to United Tent and Awning
- The former Cole Bros. wagons arriving in South Houston in 1936. Pfening Archives.

Company in Los Angeles for \$2,250.

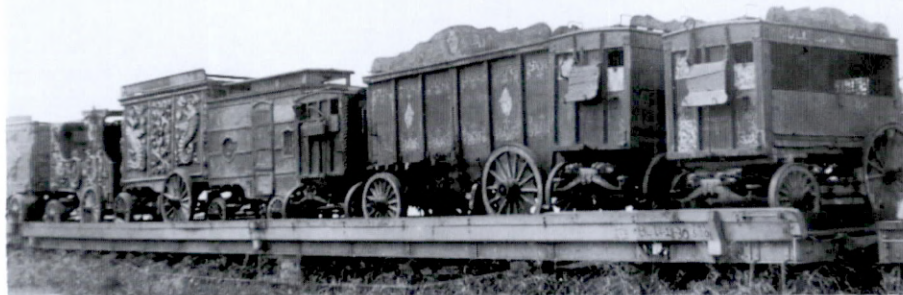
At this point Christy felt there was a real market for used circus equipment. Ownership of the 101 Ranch had changed and Christy again expressed interest in buying the equipment. On March 26, 1936 he received this letter from Carl F. Kennedy and Lee Russell, trustees for the 101: "We offer for cash, subject to forty-eight hours acceptance and subject to prior sale, the following: Any of the 24 wagons on the list sent to you at \$150 each, but you to purchase not less than four.

"Or, we offer you the entire 24 wagons, six steel wagon runs, 25 wagon wheel boxes and 2 wagon wheels, together with any extra double trees we might have, for the sum of \$2,000 at the location of this equipment near Marland, Oklahoma.

"Or, we offer you items on list sent to you, excepting the 8 wood coaches, 3 wood stock cars and 1 wood flat car, for \$4,000." Nothing came of this.

Christy had long been aware of Floyd King's Cole Bros. 10 car circus that had been languishing on a rail siding in East St. Louis since 1930. On April 29, 1936 Christy bought the show for \$600. This low amount probably represented the money due for renting track space, with the equipment basically coming free.

The bill of sale listed miscellaneous lot of circus property consisting of 19 wagons and contents, 15 bundles of canvas, tent, poles, jacks, seats and stringers. There is no mention of rail cars. It can be assumed that Venice Transportation had sold them earlier.



The May 16 *Billboard* reported: "While playing the St. Louis Police Circus last week with his animal acts, G. W. Christy purchased the former Cole Bros. fifteen car circus equipment. It had been stored in East St. Louis, Illinois in the Venice Transportation Company yards. The transaction was made through Henry V. Gehm, president of Venice." Christy attached a penciled inventory to the bill of sale. Among the wagons listed were: a steam calliope, a tableau with hippo on sides, a cages with carved sides and three good cages. He penciled a note at the bottom of the bill of sale stating, "Old Cole Bros. equipment, a total loss getting it to Houston."

The bill of sale actually lists Henry V. Gehm, of Webster Grove, Missouri as the seller, not Venice Transportation Company. The main Christy animal unit consisting of 3 elephants, dogs, mules, 6 menage and 8 liberty horses played the Canadian National Exhibition in the fall of 1936. The October 3 *Billboard* stated that after the Toronto date the entire Christy unit sailed for Honolulu and E. K. Fernandez dates. Harold Christy went to Houston to erect several large tents for the fair there.

1937

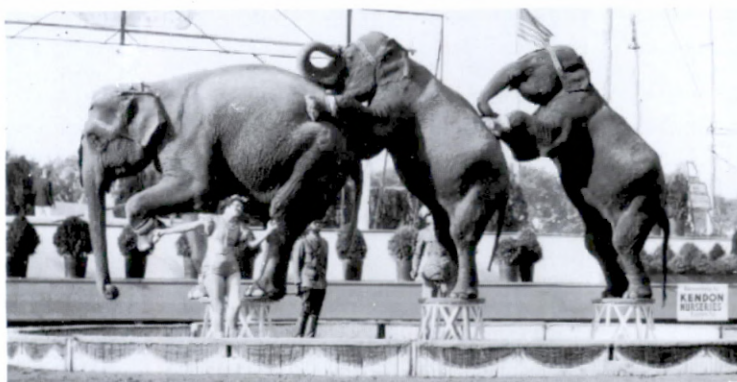
Christy recalled: "In 1937 I contracted with Stanley Graham, who had organized a circus using all midgets. We were to furnish our animal unit of elephants and horses. There were 122 midgets, all circus performers. They even had a midget band.

"We opened in Dallas in the heart of the city under a big top. Business was only fair but the show moved to its second stand in San Antonio. But it was a flop. It closed for lack of funds. Snake King, of Brownsville, Texas, was with it with his big lion act. He too, like the midgets, was stranded in San Antonio. The creditors placed the show equipment in a local storage house. We loaded a baggage car with our animals and went back to Houston. Another loser to our credit.

"About a year later I was back in San Antonio where I had contracted to furnish canvas for the San Antonio Fat Stock show. It included one of the largest spreads of canvas I ever saw. We erected five large circus tents on a rocky lot where it was really a job to drive stakes. Three of the tents were six pole big tops. The others were push pole tents about forty feet wide but

very long. This engagement was a most pleasant one.

"About this time we joined what turned out to be another fly-by-night indoor operation in Boston. It was billed as the Great London Hippodrome Circus and Wild Animal Show and was promoted by Charles Gordon. Two weeks were booked in the massive Boston Garden. The engagement opened with a matinee. The announcer was entirely too weak for such a big building, so I was approached to take over the M.C. job. I donned my tuxedo and took



The Christy elephants, presented by Gertrude Thomas, at the Allentown, Pennsylvania fair in 1937. Pfening Archives.

over that night. I wanted to see the show go over, so had not even mentioned a salary. I announced the performance and arranged the program, but that did not make much difference. Business was only fair. The show had advertised that ten Cadillacs were to be given away. I broadcasted about the cars on local stations. By the end of the week some were paid and some were not. So there was another bloomer, as we call them."

The Christy Mighty Cavalcade of the Circus, with three elephants, six ponies, ten horses and one mule played a date in Winnipeg. The *Billboard* of April 17 said the unit was booked solid until November.

In the late fall of 1937 Christy took his animal unit to Hawaii for E. K. Fernandez. Due to a shipping strike they did not return until February 23, 1938.

1938

A *Billboard* article dated December 30, 1938 said: "The Christy circus unit ended one of its most successful seasons with the close of the Shrine indoor circus in Canton, Ohio. The unit played a total of 29 weeks at circuses, fairs and parks during the year and, according to George Christy, has more than 30 weeks already contracted for 1940.

"Three elephants, an eight-horse liberty act, an eight-pony act, three menage horses and a goat and monkey appeared in Canton. Christy revealed that he had purchased the Pallenberg Doberman Pinscher dog act, which will go in the unit next year. Merrett Belew and Edith Christy assist in presenting the acts."

1941

Christy recalled: "After playing a number of dates for Bob Morton of the Hamid-Morton circus in 1941 were booked in Atlantic City, New Jersey at the Million Dollar Pier for the summer by the Hamid Booking Agency. The animal acts were way out on the end of the pier. We housed the elephants in a large pen about half way to the end of the pier. The customers had a big-time feeding them. That was until a Jewish fellow strolled by to inspect everything as he went. He came to the elephants and was feeding them peanuts. He was having a great time when old Daisy spied his new Panama hat. She slyly reared over and removed the hat and bingo the hat was in her mouth. She enjoyed that soft straw. The man raised cane and said he wanted a new hat. The newspapers got hold of that tid bit of news. The fellow got a new hat and we could not have received so much publicity for a thousand dollars.

"During the Miss America contest we entered our horses and elephants. We had an announcer from a local radio station broadcast from atop of an elephant as the girls marched the boardwalk in a parade.

"Harry James, who had grown up on the Christy Bros. Circus, visited me on the Million Dollar Pier while he was playing the Steel Pier. What a riot he created among the teenagers."

In October 1941 several Christy winter quarters buildings were wrecked by a hurricane. The big wild animal building was demolished, and the elephant and ring stock buildings were badly damaged on both sides. The shop building had one side blown in, and all the wiring throughout the quarters was wrecked. Much of the 12 foot high fencing was blown down. One garage disappeared completely. No insurance was carried on the quarters buildings.

1943

In early 1943 Christy ran this advertisement in the *Billboard*: "Finest

circus unit animals for sale. The famous Christy circus unit, six animal acts, three elephants, ten horses, four ponies, monkeys and dogs. Highest class stage, theater or circus acts with best props. Nineteen animals. Can book buyer twenty thousand dollars' worth of dates right now. Reason for selling I am retiring. Highest national reputation and complete in every detail. Ready show now. A going high class big business with men to handle, ready to work for buyer. Also complete equipment for fifteen car railroad circus and some trucks for truck circus."

1944

In February of 1944 Kelly Miller and Milton Herriott went to South Houston and bought the eight black and white horse Christy liberty act for the Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros. Circus.

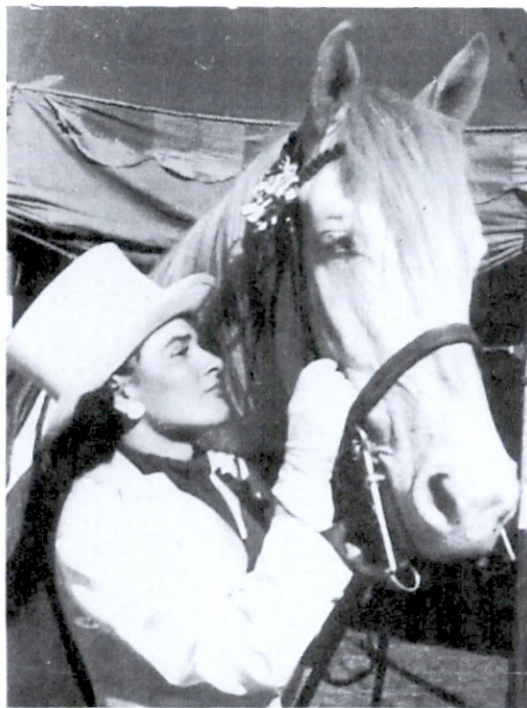
Christy ran an ad in the March 4 *Billboard*: "Circus for sale. Can equip complete circus with tents, seats, light plant, side show banners, wagons, steam calliope and 50,000 sheets of litho paper."

He sent this letter to a prospective buyer on March 15, 1944: "We have 21 circus wagons, especially built for a ten or fifteen car circus. That is they are all light, most are fourteen feet. Have five or six finely carved tableau wagons; three cross type cages, on flat cars; one extra good pole wagon with steel sills and a great set of side hooks for all big top center poles with a fifteen car show; water wagon, round tank type with steel sill; cookhouse wagon with meat compartment; ticket wagon, regular circus type; steam calliope, regular cut out calliope wagon with heavy carvings on sides, boiler and instrument in it, but the whistles were stolen, company quoted me a new set for \$165 before the war; one big prop wagon for props and seat jacks, practically new. The balance are baggage wagons. We have about 20 extra wheels we will give with them."

"I am quoting this lot of 21 wagons for only \$3,000. That is stealing this outfit as there are enough for a fifteen car circus and it would cost that much to build the pole, ticket and jack wagon alone."

"Also have steel train runs, extra good ones for \$200 a pair. Have flat train plates that go between flats for wagons to run over, never saw any as good, \$15 each. Also have lead bars, body poles, train lights, snub ropes and pull up snatch blocks. Four chariots, either pony or horse hitches at \$150 each. Two extra fine elephant howdahs, built for Ringling show, \$100 each."

"Some of the wagons are 12 feet and



Mrs. Elizabeth Christy with her horse High Fashion. Circus World Museum collection.

the cages about 9 feet. We have one long trailer with only two tires \$400.

"I have a dozen people figuring for the wagon equipment and it won't be here long. The only reason for this price is that I am retiring completely. Always asked \$7,500 for them."

"Just shipped an entire circus outfit to Washington D.C. for an Army camp show opening in North Carolina on March 27."

The August 26 *Billboard* contained this Christy ad: "Circus wagons for sale. 19 parade and baggage wagons. Easily converted to rubber tired wheels. Fifteen thousand sheets of litho paper, 2 cents a sheet. 120 by 200 foot tent. Room needed for war factory reason for selling." This suggests that a large amount of paper had been sold from the earlier advertisement. Some of the paper went to Dailey Bros. as Christy paper appeared in Dailey billboards.

Christy advertised in the December 2, 1944 *Billboard*: "Circus wagons for sale. Everything for a 15 car show. Two truck loads of six color lithographs, 2 1/2 cents a sheet." It is interesting to note that he raised the price of the paper by a half cent.

A large number of lithographs had accumulated in quarters over the years. Christy paper was sold to the King Bros. Circus as well as Dailey Bros. Neither attempted to block out the title. Floyd King used the window work with only a King date tag at the bot-

tom. Christy said he sold \$10,000 worth of paper for \$500. Although there had been references in 1933 to large amounts of Lee Bros. and Heber Bros. paper being in South Houston, none appeared on other circuses. Practically no Lee Bros. lithos have survived in public or private collections.

Christy noted: "We closed the indoor unit at the Oklahoma State Fair in 1944. It was then that I quit the circus business for good. Brother Harold went back to his home in Philadelphia. He bought an eighteen acre farm and went to work as a foreman in a factory."

1947

In 1947 three cross cages and a Gentry Bros. pony ticket wagon were sold to Arvill Allread, of Red Bluff, California. The whereabouts of the Allread wagons is unknown. The Cole Bros. Sullivan & Eagle steam calliope was sold to Dr. Karland Fishkorn, who later sold it to Floyd King for use on his truck show.

A surprised advertisement appeared in the October 18 *Billboard*: "For sale 13 circus wagons, formally with Christy Bros. Circus. Only three bandwagons left. Baggage, property, cookhouse, water and pole wagons, \$100 each. Frank Bauersfeld, Rock Island, Illinois."

These were the remaining wagons from the 1929-1930 Cole Bros. Circus that were still at the South Houston winter quarters. Bauersfeld's involvement is unknown. In any case, he did not sell them.

1948

Christy had pretty well cleaned out his Southern Show Equipment Company circus inventory. Most of what was left was what remained of the 1930 Cole show.

Tom Parkinson visited the South Houston quarters on March 7, 1948. A report of his visit appeared in the July 1948 *Hobby-Bandwagon*: "Three tableau wagons, one cage and 10 baggage wagons are parked at the place which had been home for some of the most famous parade wagons--Christy Bros. quarters at South Houston, Texas."

"There are the kind circus fans wonder what became of--they have sunburst wheels, carved scrollwork, whiffle-trees and--behind them--lots of history."

"The tableau and cage are in what appears to be usable condition. The baggage wagons, all formally on Floyd King's 1929 Cole Bros. 10 car circus, are in somewhat more rundown condition."



The former Christy owned Cole Bros. wagons in the Railroad Fair parade in Chicago in 1949. Pfening Archives.

"At least two of the tableau wagons are from the old Cole show, too, and were on Gentry-Patterson circus earlier.

"The third tableau is in better condition than the others and it is more highly decorated. Identification of it has not yet been made, but it is probably from the Cole show. I have never seen it or a photo of it elsewhere. All are parked in an open field.

"These 13 wagons are presumed to be the ones recently offered for sale from South Houston by Frank Bauersfeld of Rock Island, Illinois in an ad that appeared in the October 18, 1947 *Billboard*.

"The cage is in a different part of the quarters property and so may belong to G. W. Christy still.

"It is a beautiful antique with lots of carvings, statue corners, mirrors and included in the carved design--the title 'Barnum, Bailey & Hutchison.' It is behind one of the three Christy buildings now being used as factories.

"The Cole wagons are partially loaded with odds and ends of show equipment. G. W. Christy still lives in a neat bungalow at the front of the tract.

"George Hubler's set of photographs show the 10 baggage wagons. Because the tabs are not shown, it is presumed that they were moved there more recently."

1949

In 1949 the former Sparks Seahorse tableau, a tableau with an oval on the sides and a tableau with a diamond on the sides were sold to the Chicago Railroad Fair. The wagons were later sold to circus fan Bob Senhauser of New Philadelphia, Ohio, who in turn sold them to the Circus World Museum. The remaining Cole baggage wagons rotted down in the Christy quarters.

After disposing of nearly all of his circus property and having become a wealthy man in the oil business Christy became a respected citizen of South

Houston. Friends asked him to run for mayor in 1947, but he declined. Christy was quoted as saying, "I retired from the circus business and being mayor would have put me right back where I started."

Two years later he ran and won. In 1955 he sought the post again, losing by four votes. Christy challenged the election and won, but by the time the suit was decided, the term had expired.

He lost races for the office in 1957 and 1959. However in 1961 he won a special election after the mayor died in office. He won the regular election that year and continued as mayor until 1971. The old showman ran the city for a total of 19 years.

The mayor's job paid \$1 a year, but Christy, a millionaire and once the largest landowner and the biggest taxpayer in South Houston, never cashed the city's paychecks. Christy's second wife Beth once called him "a working mayor" who labored with city workers and sometimes drove a bull dozer on city jobs. Once when the city couldn't afford to hire a janitor, Christy picked up a broom and swept out city hall.

Christy noted: "I organized the South Houston Rotary club and now [September 1969] I am still a member. I was president in 1950 and 1951. I had organized and was president of the South Houston Lions club, and built it up to 90 members, then two dissenters ran the club down to 32 members. This caused me to resign and organize the Rotary club.

Christy remembered: "In 1949 things were bad. The city of South Houston was in financial trouble. The opposition

party set up a candidate for mayor for what we thought to be a stooge to take the fall for the financial condition and its after effects. This time again the local pressure from so many citizens came to bare on me with a petition of some 799 names asking me to file for mayor. I succumbed to that request.

"Instead of the usual time for inducting a new mayor or any officials, which the law required to be five days, There was some difficulty getting the books shaped up so that city hall was not turned over to me for seventeen days. Then with a deficit and a bond payment to be met each month starting immediately there was no source of income available to meet those payments. I used the only course available to raise that money by raising the water bills one dollar per month. This just about paid the outstanding bond payments.

"But now there was still no cash in the till at city hall. The old barn like structure, forty years old, resembled a pig sty. Before I could possibly think of holding the first council meeting with any sort of dignity I quickly remodeled it by installing a rostrum, doors so we could lock up, wall paper where there was none, and roof repairs that caused city files to get wet. This I paid for as there were no funds available. I at once bought three desks, many chairs, and files for the office. I loaned \$965 to the city so that we could operate with a degree of dignity.

"Then I found the only seats for visitors were plank benches. I replaced them with fifty folding chairs. Since there was no money for city improvements we started a drive for donations to build a park. The city never had one. The citizens donated \$745. My business friends in Houston came though donating another \$900, and I personally used \$2,200 of my own funds.

"A hundred citizens freely came forth and contributed the labor to

A group of former Cole Bros. baggage wagons in Christy quarters in 1948. Tom Parkinson photo.



build the park with its rest rooms, three barbecue pits and a twenty by forty foot swimming pool, with a steel covered shed along one side for mothers to sit. We had swings and play apparatus for the children. The park was enclosed by a chain link fence with a turn style gate so no small babies could get outside on the street.

"I was very proud of that accomplishment. South Houston was really happy with the 100% cooperation on all sides. There were no split citizens then. But that came soon. After my second term in office the nasty jealous opposition started showing. It was led by only three people. Distortions, and lies took the place of the fine cooperative spirit. And it still exists today. Dishonest elections, which were proven in the Supreme court, further split the city. Voters confidence was violated. Land values were hard to come by. Valuations on property were raised beyond true values. Ordinances started pouring out of city hall like water. All restricting the people and city progress. All around us progress was forged ahead, while South Houston remained far behind the times.

"To this day [1960] I am thoroughly disgusted with the town. I love my home town. I boosted it with all my vigor. Every Thursday for two years I broadcasted South Houston's virtues and opportunities over the radio. But hate and jealousy have ruled the roost and destroyed that fine loyal love for our city. Today there are twenty vacant stores, many vacant houses and practically no new building. Unethical policing has hurt the town more than anything else.

"I do hope other towns and small cities will benefit from the sad lesson South Houston has experienced from 1952 to 1960. As soon as it is possible for me to dispose of my vast holding here I will feel very happy to leave the town that I loved so much in the past. I am sad at heart to think of what this little city could have developed into, had hate not overtaken good judgement."

1964

The June 9 Houston *Post* published an article about Christy's gifts to the Circus World Museum: "The last of the circus is gone forever from South Houston.

"The big warehouse loft that has housed the remains of the



George Christy and F. Beverly Kelly in Milwaukee in 1964. Pfening Archives.

once great Christy Bros. Circus is now empty of everything except the dust that had gathered there since 1925.

"South Houston Mayor George W. Christy gave the last of the circus relics, including the bones of four elephants, giant side show banners, and trunks filled with musty but still beautiful costumes, tickets, posters and elephant harness to the Circus World Museum.

"A giant truck large enough to hold five elephants, backed up to the block and tackle that dangled from the loft. They started exploring the relics and loading them into the truck yesterday. They left for Wisconsin this morning.

"Circus World has already restored the five great circus wagons gifted previously by Christy.

"Houston's Mrs. Florence Stancliff was responsible for the Christy circus relics going to Baraboo. She convinced Christy they would bring a lot of happiness to a lot of people and it would go on forever."

Christy remembered: "On September 19 I appeared at the Circus Fans of

Mr. and Mrs. Christy and son George Jr. in 1956. Pfening Archives,



America convention in San Antonio, Texas. This was my first convention as I had only become a member in 1963, when Mrs. Florence Stancliff organized the George W. Christy tent in Houston.

"I received a hearty reception when I arrived on the third day of the meeting. I was scheduled as the speaker at the banquet that night. My speech told of the loyalty of circus people and those famous words of the circus: 'The show must go on.' During the evening I received the greatest

appreciation and recognition of my entire career as a big railroad circus owner. There was a standing ovation at the finish. I never realized I was so famous throughout this great land of ours. But there they were standing in front of me, applauding and applauding. I was eating it up. This coming after all these years after Christy Bros. Big Five Ring Wild Animal Circus closed in 1930, and all my circus life had been completed at the Oklahoma State Fair in 1944. I completely ran out of colorful passes I had autographed. I had brought only 150 of them."

1965

In 1965 Christy came to Milwaukee for the Schiltz Circus Parade. Also on hand was F. Beverly Kelly. The two famous circus personalities caused quite a commotion among the many circus historians on the lake front grounds and in the lobby of the Pfister Hotel. As he was guided around the grounds by Chappie Fox he proudly identified the large number of wagons he formerly owned.

1967

In spite of what George W. wrote in 1960 he continued to serve South Houston. The June 1967 issue of *Entre Nous Houston* reported in part: "George Washington Christy, 78 year old showman mayor of South Houston, is fixing to retire, although he has just been reelected and expects to serve out his two year term. He says he has two understudies, both dedicated to the Christy policies of selfless public service, municipal thrift, opposition to heavy industry, implementation of the belief that the least government is the best government and the conviction that



The Christys on George's 80th birthday. Pfening Archives.

there's no business like show business. "It was after he had the South Houston political hey-rube snake-charmed his way into in 1949 that Mayor Christy's enemies, including the press of Houston, began tent staking unmercifully. A political minority and the press are still at it, after six full terms and one part term of Christyism in the thriving suburban town on the Galveston Freeway and Berry Gully.

"Of course, George has been re-elected continuously since 1960, and he won the last election on April 4 by a vote of 887 to 490. Obviously the mayor has friends too, he still holds the tax rate at \$1.50, valuations at 40 per cent. And he never has accepted a nickel of pay for his services. He insists that he doesn't really want the job, that he's tried to get rid of it before--although not to just anybody.

"Why once when I was out of office," he said, "they ran in a bunch of what the called auxiliary policemen and began stopping people on Spencer Highway and making the pay \$50 fines. They took in \$59,000 a year that way. Well, so many people petitioned me to run for mayor again that I just had to do it. You see, I'm the police commissioner too. Now we have nine policemen, which is all we need."

"But I'll tell you something else. Every time I get elected I have to build a water system. Well, we have a good one now."

"I remember the first time I ever met George Christy. It was right after he had become mayor for the first time back in in the late '40s. I had gone to the South Houston City Hall to seek an interview. 'Why, you won't hardly ever find George in his office,' a sec-

retary told me. Except maybe at night. He's out paving the streets.

"So I found the crew at work and asked a man in work clothes who was tamping asphalt where I might find the mayor. 'Why, I'm George Christy,' replied the mayor.

"Houston city, as well as South Houston, will not soon forget this warm-hearted, jovial, fun-loving, yet generous and social-minded man who carried delight to millions of Americans in the innocent decades when the entertainment industry was alive and on wheels from ocean to ocean. The world of the big top may remember him longest, for Christy Brothers' gilded wagons are proudly enshrined in the Circus World Museum in Wisconsin, where the other Christy treasures will go upon their owner's death.

"Some of the posters hung in the Christy home, at 22 Spencer Highway, picture 'the five Christy Brothers, John, Harold, Charles, William and George.' But there never were but two--George and Harold--and Harold was a child during the big show's heyday.

"That picture of brother John is really Buffalo Bill," George admits. "Charles and William are the Smith brothers without whiskers."

"This is the secret of George Christy. He is happy only when he is doing at least five things at once. That's why South Houston's mayor/police commissioner drills water wells to the blue sands, is now building his town a new public library and is admittedly and sincerely not above going out and cleaning a citizen's privy if it needs it. He bought 100 Washingtonia robusta palm trees in the Rio Grande Valley and planted them along the Galveston Road in South Houston and saw all but five of them freeze the following winter. He personally helped lay 110 blocks of paving in his town. He gave away uncounted truckloads of goodies to the people of South Houston at annual Christmas parties."

It is clear that G. W. Christy had easily made a smooth transition from the circus marquee to the country club. He had two completely different careers and was most successful at both.

1968

As mayor and police commissioner of South Houston Christy became a member of the American Judiciary Society, as he said, "to keep me up on law and justice." He also became a member of the Platform Association of Chicago, an organization for public speakers.

The George W. Christy branch of

Harris County public library system was dedicated on January 7, 1968.

1971

After his defeat in the 1971 mayor's race the Christys moved to a home in southwest Houston's exclusive Tanglewood area.

On June 20 he wrote to a friend saying he was not really well and had been advised by his doctor not to travel to the Milwaukee circus parade.

1975

Christy was rushed to a hospital on August 6, 1975 where he died on August 8 at age eighty-six. He was survived by his wife Elizabeth and son George, Jr. of Houston, two sisters and brother Harold, all of Pennsylvania. He was interned in the family plot at Forest Park Lawndale Cemetery in Houston.

Elizabeth Christy died on February 3, 1997 at age 84.

Some material in this article came from the Circus World Museum, Joe Bradbury, John Polacsek, Ted Bowman, Ken Harck, Bob MacDougall, Dale Riker, Florence Stancliff, Harry L. Kingston, and Robert F. Slatzer. Special thanks go to Mrs. Elizabeth Christy who provided full access to the Christy archives to Tom Parkinson in the 1970s. Most of the information and photographs credited to the Circus World Museum originally came from George and Elizabeth Christy.

George Washington Christy, circus owner, mayor and millionaire. Circus World Museum collection.



The Dog Haters

In 1949, the Clyde Beatty Circus was coasting through the southern states to an early closing in Texas. On September 10 the circus gave two performances in Bastrop, Louisiana. After a Sunday run we arrived in Monroe. As I alighted from the sleeper, I was going toward where the flat cars were being unloaded when one of the train hands told me that during the night enroute to Monroe a group of men had redlighted all the dogs off the circus train. We had our dog Sassy and our cat Texas in the possum belly of the cook house wagon. It had been securely built with plenty of air space. I had a heavy railroad padlock to deter anyone from releasing them. The men had to use a crowbar to pry off the lock. As expected the box was empty when I got to the wagon. I was told by the train night watchman that he was sleeping under one of the wagons on the flat car when our cat crawled under his blanket.

There was a passenger train at the depot near where the circus train was being unloaded. I went into the station and asked when the next train would leave for Bastrop. The agent said the train was leaving in ten minutes. With that information I rushed over to the sleeper and told Mrs. Staley the bad news. She was dressed in seconds and was on the train to Bastrop to try and find our dog.

Reaching Bastrop she was greeted in the depot by three of the circus dogs. Asking the passenger agent about the movement of the circus train the night before she was told that they had turned the train around on the "Y" about two miles out of town near an old saw mill. With that she grabbed a taxi cab outside the depot, muddy dogs and all. Reaching the saw mill she had the driver take care of the dogs. She then started up the single track calling out for Sassy. The railroad track ran through a deep gully. After walking about a mile she came to some shacks occupied by blacks. Asking if they had seen a white dog one of the women said a little white dog was walking besides the track headed for Monroe. Plodding along for what seemed like ages and about to give up Mrs. Staley spotted a small blur way up ahead. Sure enough when she got up closer she found it was Sassy.

Half crying and praying she walked all the way back where

THE CIRCUS STEWARD

PART XII

By John M. Staley

she had left the other dogs with the cab driver. The first thing she asked was how much he would he charge to take her and the dogs to Monroe. He said he could not go for less than \$25. All she said was "let's go."

Arriving on the circus grounds she was told that they had found all of Dorothy Herbert's dogs. They had been thrown off the circus train in their cages. They were all crippled to some extent. I believe some had to be put away. It was a shame that after all the years to train and put an act together someone had to act as God and destroy them.

I have wished I could have put my hands on some of the men who headed the group that night. One was a boss, another was an executive. Both have gone to the great beyond. Another I see every so often in Sarasota.

I was Chased by a Mad Elephant

The following story was written by Charles J. Luckey who passed it on to me.

The Sells-Floto circus had finished the afternoon performance in Orange, Texas on October 1, 1922. The show

Gladys, Susan and John Staley with Russell Bros. Pan Pacific Circus in 1945. Pfening Archives.



grounds were not large enough to erect all the large tents. The menagerie had to be side-walled or corralled. The cages, elephants, camels, zebras and other hay eating animals were out in the open.

That day the elephants did not use the back door of the big top. As there was no road to reach the menagerie the elephants used the connection between the big tent and the menagerie. Everything was calm, cool and peaceful.

Everybody was relaxing, playing cards or just enjoying the few idle moments between the afternoon and night performance of the circus. It was the time of day to feed and water the animals. The tents were jammed and crowded together. There was no way for the water wagon to get near the menagerie. Consequently the animal men had to carry water from near the side show on the midway. With the water hydrant being only a couple of blocks away from the lot the boss elephant man told his herd workers to take the elephants and the water barrels to the hydrant. Word was passed down the line to unhook the chains, to lead the elephants through the front door or main entrance. The steel railings that were used as aisles for the circus patrons had been removed. All twelve elephants moved along single file, quietly holding tails.

One large male elephant named Floto had been restless for the prior week. It was mating season. No male elephant can ever be trusted at this time. Without the slightest provocation he may turn on his trainer. All the men had to be alert at all times, never turning their back when within reach of a male elephant at the mating season. The men must be one move ahead of the male. Being conscious of this, handlers rarely take unnecessary chances.

It seems one of the men had forgotten what he had been told or had no previous experience with male elephants, as he neglected this essential rule. Floto had been nervous, much more so the prior two days. He showed no enmity toward anyone. Jimmy Dooley, the superintendent, had used Floto that morning after parade to shove all the cages to their proper place in the menagerie. Floto had worked in one of the elephant acts during the afternoon show and allowed himself to be chained to the stakes. But each time he had a grim look in his eyes.

As a rule when elephants get too obstinate they are hobbled, and cross chained when they show a tendency of running away. For a bad elephant they also put on a drag chain. It is a long chain fastened in front of the elephant above his front toes, the other end trailing on the ground. As they walk or start to run they step on the chain. In so doing they trip, which keeps the elephant from running very far. It is also a safeguard giving the men a fighting chance to keep from rendering any undue extirpation.

Old time elephant men like Newman, Conklin, Emery, Mooney and Denman all used this system, never having any real serious trouble, no large overwhelming damage suits to litigate. But in recent years untold damages have been done by elephants. It does seem strange that the old time bosses I have just named could handle elephants under all conditions, not having to pay out thousands of dollars for damages.

The elephants were going through the front door, down the midway, to the water hydrant. Four of them carried the empty barrels with their trunks and snouts.

The water man soon had the barrels running over. The elephants had a big time playing with the water. Filling their trunks, they would squirt the water all over their bodies. After having their fill they waddled back to the menagerie, carrying their water barrels. Nothing happened on the way.

The men were chaining the elephants. When it came Floto's turn he had other ideas. He went to his regular place, as told to do. But when the man stooped down to fasten the chain on his leg up went Floto's trunk, ready to strike.

Someone shouted to the man to look out for Floto. The handler tried every conceivable way to chain him. But no dice, whenever he stooped with the chain up would go Floto's trunk to strike.

All of a sudden Floto made a savage charge at Mom, a female lead elephant. He rammed his trunk and tusks under her stomach, upsetting her as if she was a mere toy. Well, the war was on. All at once Floto knew he was master of the situation and we were his enemies. He was out to kill. Everybody gave him a wide berth. Everyone scrambled for cover.

Dooley and all of the herd workers took refuge behind the other elephants, who unintentionally had not been chained. This turned out to be a big oversight.

The men by insidious maneuvers led the herd of elephants out of the me-



Some of the Sells-Floto elephants with their name banners around 1918. Floto is third from right. Pfening Archives.

nagerie through the front door. But it was a hard task to herd them all together. Just imagine if you were one of the men in their predicament trying to lead eleven frightened elephants. One faulty step, one little slip up and you could be mangled or trampled on, in either case probably causing death.

These men never got any credit for their courage. All they got was abuse if they stumbled or fell. The public must be protected, property sustained. These men were aware of these responsibilities. It was part of their job, no matter what the circumstances might be. Their own safety was the least consideration.

The elephants had to be moved to a safe place; for if the eleven elephants were to stampede, there was no telling what the outcome might be. So with a lot of precautionary measures and strategy, we finally got them to the circus train where the steel elephant stock cars kept them secured as a safeguard to both people and property.

Back on the circus grounds, Floto, left to himself and not in a pleasant frame of mind, started to ramble around the wild animal cages in the menagerie. He tried to upset a tiger cage, but Zora, one of the young Bengal tigers did not approve. She reached out every time Floto came near her cage and clawed him on his nose. He then turned his attention to other parts of the corralled menagerie. He spied the big candy stand lined up with peanuts, pop corn and Cracker Jacks and proceeded to help himself to all the goodies that came into contact with his trunk. After foraging to his heart's content he started to kick the stand over, scattering buckets, boxes, counter boards and anything else that came into view.

One octagonal animal cage containing parrots, macaws and parakeets was located in the center of the menagerie that eventful day. No one ever knew which of the birds kept up a continuous chatter, saying, "Push it up

Floto. Push it up Floto." It was an order he had been hearing each day when the parade came back to the circus grounds. One of the animal men used Floto to push the cage wagons in line around the sides of the menagerie. Poor Floto, not knowing whence the order came, kept pushing one cage, then another. He finally relinquished the idea and went back to his old place where all the elephants had stood. There he stood reluctantly, as if waiting for some human to appear on whom he could wreak his vengeance.

We all were at a safe distance and well concealed. Even the so-called dare devils and would-be heroes had vanished. Opposite the main entrance and on the opposite side from the side show was a row of small buildings and a few homes. All the occupants by this time knew about the mad elephant. By this time a large crowd had gathered, which did not help the situation one bit. We were expecting some of the herd workers back from the circus train, especially some of the trainers. Then, too, we expected Floto to come tearing out of the menagerie, trumpeting to high heaven.

None of the town people realized the damage that threatened only a few yards away. Behind flimsy canvas and a few wooden side poles there was lurking a mad elephant.

Some of the circus executives generally went downtown between shows to find a cool dining room, or to do some shopping. Most of the bosses and a few of the circus staff luckily were on the show grounds. They were trying to persuade the people to leave the lot. They even pleaded, but to no avail. People wanted to see the mad elephant.

Zack Terrell, the manager of the circus, was downtown in a barber shop while this was all going on. The chauffeur was given the time and place to pick him up.

The chauffeur was a big, good natured farm boy in his first year away from home. With plenty of time on his hands he drove back to the show grounds just in time to see Floto try-

ing to demoralize the entire circus. Sensing the acute situation, he became all excited, jumped back into the staff car and drove to the barber shop. Terrell was still in the chair.

The driver was no more inside the door when he started to blabber to his boss, "You ought to be on the lot. Floto is having a barrel of fun. First he upset Mom and ran everybody out of the menagerie. He kicked the candy stands over and is pushing animal cages in all directions."

Terrell was an old-time showman. He had seen bad elephants. He knew what calamity one could cause if given the slightest chance. Only half shaved he got out of the barber chair, paid the barber and jumped into his car and was rushed back to the circus grounds.

We met him near the entrance of the midway. At once the manager started toward the front door. We had warned him but he had to see for himself. He strode cautiously to the front door, moved very slowly behind the canvas curtain. When he was out of sight I shouted to a lady living in one of the houses near the main entrance to be sure and keep at least one lower window open, because she would undoubtedly have a visitor as soon as Floto the mad elephant spied the manager.

I did not have long to wait. Suddenly we heard a crash. Out came the boss. I mean he flew out. He then ducked behind the canvas side wall. This happened so suddenly I had no time to run. I wheeled, made five or six giant strides and dived head first through the open window landing flat on my face and belly in the lady's living room. I was so darn scared and excited to feel for sore spots. I turned and looking out the window in time to see Floto going back into the menagerie, almost wrecking the front door. Terrell called the bosses and men who were out front together. He said it was getting late. The sun was almost down, darkness was closing in fast. The town people would shortly be starting to the show grounds for the night performance. Something had to be done quickly. As long as we had some daylight they had a chance. But trying to track an elephant in the dark, that was one thing none of us cared to undertake. The elephants skin being dark it was difficult to detect at night. Besides, they can stand in the dark not making the slightest sound. Anyone is apt to walk right into their clutches. Once within their reach it's just too bad. They will drive you between their front legs with their trunk, then kneel on you. That is how they crush their enemies. Being



A parrot in the octagon cage gave orders to Floto. Pfening Archives.

aware of this, Terrell said, "We will have to get rid of Floto and immediately, because a bad elephant, foot loose, can perpetrate infinite outrages to both man and beast, as well as property damages."

Someone suggested shooting Floto. "Yes," said the boss, "but who would take that chance. To shoot and miss would be risky to the gunner." He had to be done away with and soon. But how? One must have a safe place to shoot from.

The opportunity presented itself shortly. A small barn was located about one hundred yards from the corralled menagerie. With double doors in the hay loft, facing the mad elephant it was an advantageous position to shoot from. At the time it did not seem far away. But try to hit an elephant in the eye or behind the ear, close to the top of his skull so as to hit the brains. It may not seem difficult, but as elephants are constantly moving it's an ordeal, especially when you only have an ordinary rifle.

Someone had called the sheriff's department, as the circus was showing in the county. When the sheriff, two dep-

Zack Terrell, manager of Sells-Floto Circus in 1922. Pfening Archives.



uties and two ex-soldiers arrived they were all outfitted with high powered rifles. Proceeding to the hay loft they took the best positions.

Before the sheriff left for the barn he gave us each a station to cover. This was mostly to handle the traffic heading toward the show grounds. Most of the performers and some of the workmen had taken refuge on the fire escapes of a nearby school. Others climbed into wagons; some were on top of wagons. A few were underneath wagons, or any other place which provided a safe hide out and at the same time provided a prominent view of the whole situation.

My assigned position was to stop and turn all traffic from the south. Every man took to his station like it was an every day occurrence. We were waiting with nerve wracking suspense as to what the outcome would be. Then suddenly the spell was broken. We heard the ra-ta-ta-tat of rifle shots. Then, dead silence. It seemed like an hour. Everybody was excited and expecting most anything to happen at any minute.

Then in an instance came a terrific crash. Dogs barked; another crash. Then an appalling hush. Finally we caught sight of Floto coming around the big top under the guy lines next to the side poles, heading toward the menagerie.

This is what happened before and after the first volley of shots. Floto was standing in his regular place in the corralled menagerie. The sheriff and the other men with rifles had taken their places in the hay loft. There they stood, rifles cocked ready and waiting to get Floto in the right position. Floto was facing them.

Trying to shoot an elephant in the forehead, unless you have an elephant gun, is just wasting good ammunition as their skull is too thick for an ordinary rifle bullet. So they waited. Finally something attracted Floto's attention at the front door. As he turned sideways the men fired at once. It took Floto by such a surprise that he wheeled on his hind legs and charged through the big tent down the hippodrome track and out through the back door.

The dog wagon was usually spotted to the left of the back door so the dogs would not have far to go for their act in the show. One of the colored men from the big top crew was leaning against the wagon as Floto came out of the back door. He spied the man and charged, hitting the wagon with a glancing blow, causing all the dogs to bark. Floto backed up and hit the

wagon again, this time almost upsetting it. Another incident happened during this episode. A famous bareback rider heard the shooting and shouting. Like all the other people near the scene he scrambled for shelter. He dived under a porch of a house near the dressing tent. The porch was narrower than he had judged. He rammed his head against a brick wall, leaving his legs sticking outside. In the scramble for shelter someone must have stepped hard on his legs. The poor man imagined it was Floto. He thought his feet were smashed. Lying on his face flat on his belly he did not dare move. Afraid to wiggle his toes, he felt sure he was finished as a rider in the prime of his life. He must have laid under the porch for at least a half hour.

He wanted help. He cried out, but no response. Finally he mustered up enough courage to move his toes. They felt intact. He reached down and felt his legs. Nothing was wrong with either leg, only a little soreness. With a sigh of relief he crawled out from under the porch, dusted off his clothes, then wiped his face with his hankie and headed for town. He had enough excitement for one day.

Floto by this time was back in the menagerie. His head was bleeding. He was dejected as most of the bullets had found their mark. He had only flesh wounds which only irritated him all the more. He began to realize that he was isolated. He kept searching the surroundings for the other elephants. Then he ambled back into the big top, this time at a very moderate pace as if he was making observations. Walking slowly out through the curtained back door, he went into the back yard. By then not a living soul was in sight, although many eyes were watching his every move from house tops, wagons, fire escapes and other safe escape routes.

Floto walked aimlessly around the big top, then out on the street. He moved slowly, but warily, down the street until he came to the intersection where I was stationed. There he stopped, turned his head and looked my way. Well, with Floto being only about two-thirds of a block away I admit I felt a bit shaky. At the time I was wearing a white shirt, making me more conspicuous. Standing perfectly still I was at the time telling some folks sitting on their porches to please turn off the lights inside the house. They only laughed, not realizing the danger.

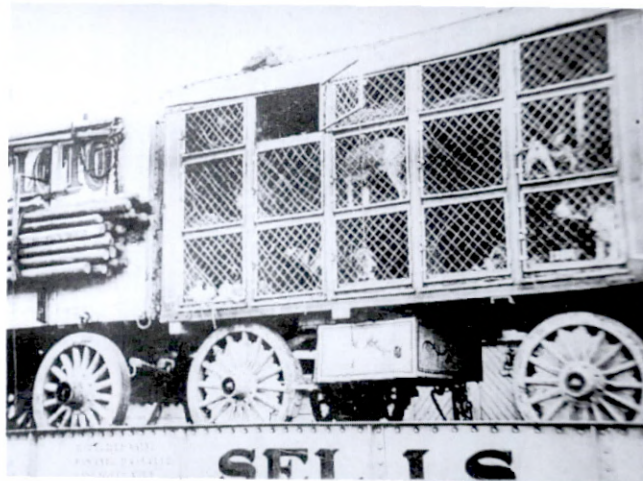
Floto, all this time, seemed to be directing his attention to the other street. At that moment an automobile came around the corner, with its bright lights shining on me for just a flash. At the same time I raised my arm and shouted to the driver to turn around, that there was a mad elephant down the street. The driver saw the elephant. Floto saw us. He raised his trunk and trumpeted, then charged toward us.

Down the street he came full speed ahead. Never before had I realized that as bulky as elephants appear they had so much power in their legs. I did not wait for the automobile to turn around. Like a streak of lightning I passed the car shouting for the driver to turn out his lights and get out of sight. The occupants had seen the elephant so they did not need a second warning. The driver responded as if by magic.

I ran as far as I dared. Floto was gaining fast, too fast for comfort and my safety. Luckily the outlying districts of Orange, Texas had deep drainage ditches on either side of the street. As Floto closed in on me I was not afraid. No, I was only scared out of my pants. My heart was almost in my mouth. I tried to jump the drainage ditch but tripped or got tangled in the high weeds. Anyhow, I ended up in the ditch, water and weed covered, falling flat on my face. Luckily the weeds were high and the water shallow. I was well covered from sight. Night was coming on which was another blessing.

I started crawling on my hands and knees through the ditch until coming to a high board fence which extended to the edge of the ditch. Jumping out of the watery ditch I ran across the road to the other side, diving underneath a house sitting on cement piers. In most of the southwestern states a large number of houses are set on concrete piers.

Floto tangled with the dog wagon parked at the back door. Pfening Archives.



about three feet off the ground; this singular construction allows me to be alive and write this anecdote.

Floto had my scent as I nosed-dived under the house. I was about forty feet away. As I hit the dirt under the house I did not stop. I kept on crawling to the other side, fearing all the time he might try to push the house off its foundation. Looking back, lying flat on my belly, I could hear Floto snorting near the house. He was feeling the ground with his trunk. While laying under the house I felt something stirring besides me. Reaching out I felt the head of a stray dog. As he came nearer I could see that he had his tail between his legs. He was just as scared as I was.

Floto backed up slowly. Then he turned and then walked down the street heading in the direction of the circus grounds. He paused at the intersection that had been my station. He stood at that one spot for a long time, at least five minutes.

By this time Floto had moved away from my hide-out under the house. I was still a bit shaky. But with curiosity stronger than fear I watched his inconstant movement, just as if making up his mind as to what kind of devilry he would perpetrate next.

Then, for some unknown reason he charged down the street, veering into the circus grounds. He headed straight for the big tent, tearing a big hole in the side wall as he went. He then ran under the blue bleacher seats, scattering seat boards, jacks and stringers. They flew in all directions. Still going, he crossed the hippodrome track, into the end ring and circled it a couple of times. Then he went onto the number two stage made of light timber. He broke through at each step. He rammed into the center ring. He circled it once, then stopped and did a perfect head stand as if he were doing his act. He went across number one stage, breaking it into kindling wood. He

then returned to his old place in the menagerie. Being alone he seemed uneasy and fidgety.

Terrell and the sheriff had been watching every move Floto made since he tore his way into the big tent. They both agreed it was time to finish him off. It was pitch dark. The customers for the night performance had been kept off the circus grounds as there was too much risk and danger for the people to be in a crowd. The sheriff and his rifle brigade withdrew once again to the hay loft in the barn.

By this time they had ob-



tained a high powered police light, allowing them a better chance at their quarry. The riflemen took their places awaiting the word to fire. When all the bullets hit Floto he was startled. He wheeled, ran through the big tent and out through the back door. This time he turned away from town and headed for the railroad tracks, a short distance away. The circus train was parked on a siding. He ran along the cars to the railroad crossing, turned down a street and headed for open country.

Floto kept going down the dirt road, as the paved street had ended. After about five miles he ran into a swamp. The sheriff and his men followed for some distance, but had to abandon the search, as the undergrowth was too

Elephants being unloaded from a Sells-Floto bull car in 1922. Pfening Archives.

heavy and the footing uncertain. None of the officers were eager to really find Floto in the swamp. He was in there, badly wounded and not in a pleasant mood. His trail was clear, easy to follow. The brush was trampled down. There was blood on the low limbs of the trees. It was decided the search was futile in the dark.

The sheriff detailed his two deputies to stand by until he could send for more men for relief as they wanted to keep Floto within bounds at least until daylight. The sheriff and the rest of his men were taken back to the circus grounds.

Reaching the show grounds we could

see that the bleacher seats had been re-erected. The side wall was repaired. The stages were not used. They were beyond repair. We had a fair size crowd in the big tent, all laughing and enjoying the show. They gave never had a thought that the wounded elephant roaming loose could return at any moment. What would happen if he did decide to return? That would be a hard question to answer. But the show must go on.

All the performers, especially the ladies, went through their acts with grim faces, artificial smiles, and their eyes glued on the back door from whence he was liable to appear at any moment.

To our relief Floto decided to stay in the swamps. After the performance I loaded everything in the wagons and loaded them on the train. The circus train left Orange shortly after midnight for Port Arthur, our next stand.

Terrell had left word with the sheriff to have Floto put away. Just before daylight the next morning Floto was sighted on a farm outside Orange. The sheriff and his posse drove out to investigate. Sure enough he was there, ugly as ever. They started firing and kept on firing until he fell, but not until he had done untold damages did he give way to the inevitable onslaught.



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1866

Dan Castello's Great Show, Moral Exhibition and Wonderful Wild Animals exhibited in Topeka on May 3, 1866. The Topeka engagement is fully covered in *Bandwagon*, May-June 1987, but other towns in Kansas also saw the show.

On May 4 and 5, Castello entertained the people of Lawrence. A one-column advertisement appeared in the *Kansas Daily Tribune* on April 22 and was repeated in eleven subsequent editions.

Listed as performers of "eminence" were Miss Kate Ormand, Miss Lucille Watson, Mrs. Dan Castello, Mrs. H. F. Nichols, Miss Ella La Moine, Mr. H. F. Nichols, Mr. Ferdinand Tournaire, Mr. Tom Burgess, clown, Mr. F. Watson, Mr. T. Holloway, Messrs Hannon and Powers, Mr. Thomas Hodge, Mr. C. Craig, and Mr. H. F. Nichols.

Considerable space was given to Herr Lengel, "the most daring artiste who has ever handled the monsters of the forests, plains and jungles."

"Herr Lengel enters the den with apparent unconcern and although they growl, spit (cat like), and strike at him, he makes them keep their distance. He feeds them, and absolutely tears a piece of meat from the clutches of the lion. 'Tis when he is about to retire that the danger becomes apparent. As he passes through the barred gate they all spring towards it, but failing to catch him, they set up a series of howls and roars, that are almost deafening. Great as the performance is one cannot behold it without a shudder, and experiencing a dread that it might terminate fatally."

"At each performance the world-renowned Humorist and Conversationalist, the best general talker of the day, DAN CASTELLO, will appear in his motley attire, give his humors of the hour, introduce his magnificent horse with the 'flowing mane,' the 'Russian Czar,' his sagacious steed, 'Andy Johnson,' the irresistible pony, the smallest and smartest in the world, 'January' and those two irrepressible quadrupeds, 'them mules,' 'Artemus Ward and Brick Pomeroy."

"An immense concourse assembled last evening to witness the performances of Dan Castello's Circus," the *Kansas Daily Tribune* reported on the 5th: "Many parts of the performance were the finest that have ever been seen in this country. The riding was good; the clown was sage and witty. The gymnastic exhibition was surprising, and Herr Lengel's visit to the lion's cage was startling and fearful. Altogether we have never wit-

ONLY BIG SHOW COMING

SUPPLEMENT

Vol. 1, Chap. 1, Part 2

By Orrin Copple King

Copyright © 1996 Orrin Copple King

nessed a more complete exhibition of the kind. The performances are continued this afternoon and evening."

The *Tribune* reporting on the final day of the run said, "A drizzling rain came down at intervals all day yesterday, preventing hundreds who would otherwise have attended, from coming to town. Nevertheless, there were goodly numbers congregated inside the pavilion at both performances. Indeed, there is such a spice of danger in the performances of Herr Lengel with the lions, that many are attracted to see if he will, like another Daniel, come out again unharmed. This lion-tamer is as far ahead of ordinary lion-tamers, as Costello is of ordinary clowns."

On May 7 and 8, Dan Castello's Great Show entertained the people of Leavenworth. The coming was heralded for ten days by a one-column ad the length of the page in the *Daily Conservative*. The same ad was used for every Kansas date.

On April 27, the *Conservative* reported, "Dead Walls.--The advantages of printing ink are duly appreciated by

Showman Dan Castello. Pfening Archives.



the agents of Castello's circus [Richard P. Jones, Director of Publications and Ben Crosby, Contracting Agent]. They have erected two dead walls upon which to bill the big show. One on Fourth street, opposite Laling's Hall, presents a surface of about a thousand square feet, and another below the post office is scarcely less in extent. Dan evidently has faith in rags and lamp-black."

The glory of Castello's bill boards was brief. "Dan Castello's bill poster thinks Kansas is a high old place for a breeze," according to the *Conservative*, April 28, "his papering having been stripped from the dead walls like bolt-ropes in a heavy nor'wester."

The editor of the *Conservative* had a warm spot in his heart for circuses: "Circus.--We presume our readers, since boyhood (and girlhood) have been to the circus. We presume that many of them have anxiously awaited the advent of the red lettered vans and shouted in very ecstasy when the cages came in sight; but did one of them ever see a circus that differed materially from its predecessor? Dan Castello's is a 'circus.' We have no higher commendation for it. Such things pleased us years ago, and the old acts please us now. We like to hear the Ring Master say, (as we did, perhaps twenty years ago) 'I never follow a fool.' And the clown with his cue from Brinale Sheridan, (or was it Coleridge) says, 'I do!' and walks out behind the blue cloth and the tinsel. What a circus was when we were a tow-headed urchin, willing to walk miles to meet it, that it is now. The same horses easily jog around the circle, the same men ride them, and make leaps through impossible hoops, and do much more on the bills than the greatest enthusiast would look for on the sawdust. But what of that? You will go. The fat man in the white waistcoat will go, and cool his corpulency with lemonade, and leer and smile at fair forms opposite, whose loveliness should shame him into virtuous thought, even if his gray hairs do not. You will go! We shall all go, and we will see nothing but what we have seen every year, perhaps, since we wore bibs and tucks, and thought the girl in spangles was an angel whom we should like to go to heaven with."

After the show had come and gone the *Conservative* commented, "The Circus.--Dan Castello put in his last appearance under canvas here last night. If patronage is a criterion of merit, Dan's must be the most mer-

itorious show we have had here for years. At all events, Dan is a host in himself and his humors will take the palm from all jokes in motley of this season. They have the finest lot of ring stock we have seen out West, and all acts of the arena are most skillfully accomplished."

Castello moved on to Atchison for exhibitions, Thursday, May 10, but despite ten insertions of his advertisement in the *Daily Champion* the show received small comment from the Atchison press.

Geo. W. DeHaven was a riverman with many years experience as captain of Missouri River steamboats. His circus of 1865 moved on river boats and the show he presented in 1866 also worked the river.

Beneath the title, "Geo. W. DeHaven & Co's Imperial Circus," in all of his newspaper ads was a cut of a twin-stacked river steamboat. The Atchison *Daily Champion*, June 21, carried the following touting the exhibitions of June 27: "Manager, G. W. De HAVEN, Treasurer, FRED OLIVER; Leader of Or., Prof. B. HAZEN; Master of Horse, M. FRAMIE."

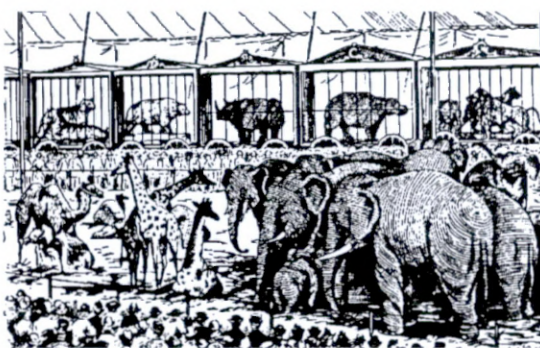
"A brilliant exemplification of the old classic and modern features of the Hippodrome and CIRCUS, in which the highest, most brilliant and intrepid performers, Equestrian & Gymnastic, are combined with the chaste and elegant *toute-ensemble* of the Parisian Amphitheater, producing at every exhibition a series of Olympian acts in which the following arenic stars will participate:

"Mad. LOUISE TOURNIARE, The brilliant and fascinating *premiere* lady rider, *Dame de Manage*, and delineator of the high school of art: Mlle KATE BAILEY, the beautiful equilibrist amazonian femme and peerless ascensionist; Mons. BARNELL, who, with his two sons, were last season 'bright particular stars' of *Cirque Napoleon, Paris*; Messrs. CARR & DERIEF, The great trapeze performers, gymnasts, acrobats and voltiguers; Mr. WILLIAM DUTTON, champion horseman of the age, and greatest bareback rider in America; Mons. THEO. TOURNIARE, the celebrated French steeplechase and hurdle rider; HENRY NORTH, the indomitable horseman and great scenic rider; GEORGE BACHELOR, classic equestrian and unconquerable gymnast; SAMUEL RINEHART, double somersault champion, and incomparable voltiguer; Mr. W. WORRELL, the famous Californian and Australian clown and Johnsonian jester--the admirable Crighton of the motley profession, and greatest of orig-

inal wits; F. S. SEMON, the humorous, irritable, and facetious representative of parti-colored fun Coriphees and Pantomimists, including distinct ballet and vaudeville corps, in which are embodied the following bevy of professional demoiselles: Madames, Valery, Bertolt, Dumels, Leclerque, Mademoiselles Desalx, (sic) Deland, Laverde, Huttonville, Stella, St. Clair, Rossini, Lemonde.

"Distinct corps of voltiguers and acrobats, and the finest and best educated Performing, HORSES AND PONIES in America, together with magnificent Brass and Stringed Bands. AT LEAVENWORTH, June 29th & 30th. Doors open 1 and 7 P. M. Admission 75 cts; children under 12, 50 cts."

Unfortunately, Atchison had no circus on June 27.



"The circus didn't reach here yesterday, as announced," according to the Atchison *Champion*, June 28. "We understand that while at St. Joseph on Tuesday the canvas was blown down and much damaged, and that the company had to remain there to repair it."

Weston, Missouri, was played on the 28th.

DeHaven kept his appointment with Leavenworth and exhibited two days, June 29 and 30. The show pleased the Leavenworth public and drew good houses, but the editor of the *Daily Conservative* was incensed by one aspect.

"A SHAMEFUL ABUSE.

"Now that DeHaven's circus has closed its performances here, we have an opportunity to make some suggestions relative to the conduct of circuses in general, without rendering ourselves liable to the imputation of a design to injure the business of this particular one.

"Since the days when the glaring and highly colored bills of these shows filled our youthful breast with admiration, and awakened therein a painful longing, which could only be satisfied with the realization of the promised pleasure--we say, since those days we never recollect of having attended a circus in which the negro, or 'nigger,' as the disciples of the saw dust circle classically

name him was not made the target of the coarsest allusions, and the victim of barbarous jokes which had not wit enough to redeem them from absolute blackguardism.

"It is time these low lived and beastly practices were stopped. When colored men, women, and children visit a circus, they pay their money like white folks, and we have always observed that they behave themselves equally as well. The badge of inferiority is made sufficiently apparent by huddling them together in a particular portion of the amphitheater, without subjecting them to the brutality of those fellows in striped garments, who, being employed to play the fool, generally seem to be qualified by nature for that *role*. The sort of humor which delights in ridiculing a poor and defenseless people never excites the risibilities of the true lady or gentleman, and is scarcely ever met save with the loud guffaw of the shameless courtesan, and the masculine blackguards who are equally shameless.

"When one of DeHaven's clowns perpetrated the stale pun 'You can rob a white man of his last penny, but you can't rob a nigger of his scent,' the decent portion of the audience seemed to shudder, while the portion that was not so decent were in ecstasies. And when this same clown, seeing a respectably dressed and modest appearing colored woman walking around the side of the amphitheater towards the place assigned her, pursued her with his mock courtesies and insulting manner, he should have been forthwith hissed from the ring.

"This is not the day, nor is Kansas the place for such exhibitions of contempt for the negro. They belong to the age of woman whipping, and baby selling, and seem to be perennial in a Kentucky or South Carolina climate. The people here are inclined to let the negro alone, to protect him from oppression,, to encourage him to honest industry, and to afford him every facility for improving and elevating his condition by his own exertions. Being so disposed, no one approves this abuse and ridicule of the negro, except such as have reason to be jealous of his superiority.

"As a whole, Mr. DeHaven's circus is one of the best that travels, and we only throw out these hints that it may be still further improved by the elimination of these obnoxious features, and that those which are to follow may avoid their use."

The first Kansas date for the New

York Champs-Elysees Circus was Wyandotte on July 28, 1866. The only information we have on the date is a short note in the Wyandotte *Gazette* on August 4: "Metcalf's Champs-Elysees Circus which performed in this city last Saturday, gave good satisfaction."

At Leavenworth the Champs-Elysees arrived one week behind James T. Johnson's Mammoth Circus. The Champs-Elysees exhibited Monday and Tuesday, July 30 and 31, while Johnson played July 23 and 24. Both shows advertised on the front page of the Leavenworth *Daily Conservative*, July 19. "THE BIG SHOW IS COMING! With New Wagons, New Harness, New Canvas, New Properties, New Costumes, Beautiful Horses, Trick Ponies, Educated Mules, and Performing Goats, Dogs, and Monkeys.

"OPPOSITION INVITED! Competition Defied. [Cut of girl dancing on horseback] The Triumphal Parade of the New York Champs-Elysees Circus.

"On the morning of the exhibition will be prodigal in magnificent scenes and gorgeous tableaux, which will display the wealth that has been so bountifully expended in rendering this Circus conspicuous for splendor and unequalled in magnitude. Prominent among the numerous features of attraction will be Six Tandem Teams of matched horse, driven by ladies.

"The novel and exquisitely beautiful Imperial Calocche (sic), drawn by six elegant ponies driven by a lady. Mounted Knights arrayed in superb apparel; besides a great variety of attractive spectacles of extraordinary grandeur. The tastefully decorated Chariot of Orpheus, Drawn By Ten Rampant Steeds, will contain Professor Rosenbury's Opera Band, from the Academy of Music, New York, composed of musicians of the highest order of excellence.

"The immense centralization of unequalled talent consists in part of the following: LEVI J. NORTH, the veteran pioneer of Circus amusements. YOUNG LEVI NORTH, the Champion Juvenile horseman of the West. MONS. BRIDGES, from the Cirque de Napoleon, Paris. M^{lle} BRILGEL, most daring and graceful rider on this continent. MADAMOISELLE AMELIA, the Pearl of the arena. SIGNOR CODONA, the Champion double somersault equestrian. MADAM JOSEPHINE DE VANIOR, the graceful artist. SIDNEY WEBB, the accomplished Matre de Cirque. MASTER FRANK ASHTON, the contortionist, or boneless boy. The wonder of the 19th Century.

"It is entirely impossible to describe within the limits of a newspaper ad-



Levi J. North in his riding costume. Pfening Archives.

vertisement, this singular performance, but suffice it to say that no gymnastic feat, however difficult, approaches his achievements. WM. ASHTON, the most accomplished gymnast of the age. JAMES WARD, the People's Clown and Shaksperian Jester. LEON CAMMEA, in his unsurpassable act on the bareback of the four fleet Ponies. MASTER WILLIE SMITH, the Equestrian Apollo. MASTER FRANK WARD, the gymnastic miracle. TONY BENTON, the Prince of Comic Singers. The above comprises the largest troupe ever organized into one company, and their varied performance will constitute a series of unparalleled success. Connected with this immense company are Prof. Willis Cobb's Troupe of Goats, Dogs, MONKEYS, Educated to perform a great variety of amusing, wonderful and difficult tricks. A description of the various feats that these sagacious, social favorites (sic) have been taught to execute, would surpass belief. Their intelligence, style and finish, exceed every kind of training the brute species ever developed, and the amazing alacrity displayed in their unique performances bring forth shouts of applause. The Trick Horses, Mars and Andrew Jackson. Trick Ponies. Gazelle,

Jenny Lind, Yankee Notions, Little Rebel, and Those Educated Mules Sid and Steve, will afford fun for the million.

"Notwithstanding the immense expense of this circus, the manager, in order to give every one a chance, has placed the price of admission within the reach of all. Our motto is 'quick sales and small profits.' Previous to the afternoon performance will be a Grand Free Exhibition Journey to the Clouds, in which Madame Josephine De Vanior will ascend a Single Slender Wire, a distance of 300 feet, to the top of the center pole. Madame Josephine, in this daring and intrepid feat, is pronounced by the Press and the Public to stand without a rival.

"This mammoth masterdom (sic) of the World will exhibit at De Kalb, July 20; Kansas City, July 27; Weston, July 21; Wyandotte, July 28; Platte City, July 23; Leavenworth, July 30, 31; Barry, July 24; Atchison, August 1; Kansas City, July 25; Troy, August 2; Independence, July 26.

"Admission 50 Cts. Children under 10 years 25 Cts. Doors open at 1 and 7 o'clock daily. GEO. H. METCALF, Proprietor.; Wm. J. Metcheat, Gen'l Agent."

On August 1, the *Conservative* reported: "A Cram.--We have never seen a greater number of people crowded within the limits of a circus, of no larger circumference than that of Metcalf's New York, than were present on Monday evening. The lowest estimate is 3,000, while others stoutly maintain that there were several hundreds above that number. We do not know how many the concern will hold, but they were all there. People will go to a good circus, and, judging from the frequent applause of the three thousand, the Champs Elysees must be one of that kind. What we saw was certainly first-class; what we felt was just as certainly uncomfortable, disagreeable and oppressive, and this latter includes the caloric as well as the toes of a juvenile's copper pointed shoes in the region of the spine. Going to the circus is very much like taking one's first trip at sea on a rough day--when we get out of the scrape we inwardly determine never to go again, and we don't--until next time."

The August 2 Atchison *Daily Champion*, reporting the exhibitions of August 1, stated, "The Circus brought an immense crowd to town yesterday. It looked as it used to when Jim Lane was advertised to make a speech here. In wagons, on horseback and afoot, white, black and yellow, men, women and children and old bachelors, everybody and his girl, all came to see the

great show with the unpronounceable name. Ichabod and his Jerusha were here, walking hand in hand along the street, gazing curiously into the shop windows and regaling themselves with alternate bites from a huge hunk of gingerbread regardless of expense. Women smoking cob pipes and nursing their progeny on the way side, men filling their tanks with ? poison and boys trying to ape the vices of their elders, contributed to make an outside show that was fully as droll to a spectator as the great Champs Elysees Circus."

This Champs Elysees ad appeared in the Leavenworth *Daily Conservative* on July 19, 1866. Kansas State Historical Society.

The *Champion* also noted that: "The abominable heat was mitigated yesterday by a fresh breeze from the North and the temperature was unexceptionably fine."

Gambling on previous shows in Kansas did not exist or was so minor as to escape notice in the press. The first reports of gambling appeared in the *Troy Reporter* following the exhibitions of the Champs Elysees on August 2: "On the day of the circus, we noticed considerable gambling going on, on our street corners, to the disgrace of the officers of the law. At Wathena, these fellows would not be tolerated, their tables were kicked over and the gamblers compelled to leave."

In August of 1866, Wathena had no newspapers, and it is not known when the Champs Elysees exhibited there, but it was some date between August 2 and the above report of August 9.

An advertisement in the *Reporter* listed O. F. Bemmer as General Agent and Judge Metcheer as Director of Publications.

Wathena witnessed Orton Brothers' Great American Circus on May 18,

THE BIG SHOW IS COMING!

With New Wagons,
New Harness,
New Canvases,
New Properties,
New Costumes,
Splendid Horses,
Trick Ponies,
Educated Mules,
AND
PERFORMING GOATS, DOGS
AND
MONKEYS.

OPPOSITION INVITED!

COMPETITION DEFIED!



Triumphal Parade

OF THE

NEW YORK
CHAMPS-ELYSEES CIRCUS

publicity for the Atchison exhibits May 20, began with an ad in the *Daily Champion* on May 9, with seven subsequent insertions.

"ORTON BROS' Great American CIRCUS!! The Star Company of America.

"This old favorite Company has been greatly augmented for the traveling season of 1867, with New Canvases, New Wagons, and with New Trappings on a scale of magnificence heretofore unknown in the Circus line, and with talent of the first order in every department. They give an entertainment unsurpassed by any. An original feature of this Company is a FEMALE SILVER CORNET BAND! consisting of ten ladies, led by their Teacher, Prof. A. Protzmar.

"They will enter town at 10 A. M., on

1867. The May 9 Wathena *Reporter*, carried a neat one-column ad and the following handout: "Circus.--Orton Bros. Great American Circus will give two of their unrivaled performances at Wathena, on May 18th, at 2 and 7 p. m. Admission 75 cents, children 40 cents. An original feature of this company, is a silver cornet band, consisting of ten ladies, led by one of the most accomplished professors of music in this country. They will enter town at 10 A. M., and will discourse some of the most delightful and soul-thrilling music extant. Three of the greatest American clowns will entertain our citizens with witticisms, side-splitting jokes, songs, etc. The 'grand and lofty tumbling' of the star acrobats connected with this company exceed the greatest efforts of our Kansas politicians. Let everybody and his wife attend. If you haven't got a wife, take your sister, and if you are so unfortunate as to have none, take somebody else's sister."

The ad and the handout were the only recognition received from the *Reporter*. "Advance

the day of exhibition, and will discourse some of the most fashionable music extant through the principal streets of Atchison, ON MAY 20TH, 1867. With this troupe will be found the regular OLD FASHIONED CLOWN, Dr. Gilkinson, The World Renowned Court Jester and Wit Billy Andrews, The Irish Clown, the funniest man alive!

"Mr. Miles Orton, the Fearless Champion Bareback Rider--Den Orton, the Irresistible Dramatic and Scenic Rider and unequaled A 'LA' PERCHE.

"Mrs. Miles Orton, with her educated Horse JUPITER, the 'best trained horse in the world,' trained by herself, will enchant all lovers of that noble animal.

"Master Leon Orton, the Youthful Rider, with Master R. Z. and the Misses Irena and Celestie, present an array of talent not often found in a single family. Mr. Gaffney, the Greatest Herculean Of the age, and many others of equal worth and celebrity, makes this indeed the model Company of this country. Doors open at 2 P. M. Admission 50 cents, Children 25c. J. F. JOHNSON, Advertising Agt."

The *Champion* reported that the show drew large crowds, and then launched into a "clever" bit about the age-old features of all circuses.

The Leavenworth *Daily Conservative* ran the same ad for eight days promoting the Orton exhibitions of May 21, 22 and 23.

The May 23 *Conservative* reported that, "The circus of Orton Brothers' is being largely patronized, and is spoken of in high terms by all who witnessed the performances of its large and well trained company. This is the last day of its continuance in Leavenworth; the last and undoubtedly the greatest exhibition of all will be this evening."

The Orton Family began in the circus business in 1854, and continued into the early years of the 1930's.

On May 27, Orton Brothers played Topeka.

An unidentified columnist writing in the May 30 Topeka *Leader* reported, "The Knights of the Round Table [probably news reporters] having been furnished with dead head tickets, attended the circus in a body, and pronounced themselves well pleased with Orton's family. The wit of the clown was highly original, and being directed principally against the negroes, was highly relished and vociferously applauded by an 'Iowa Supe' taken along by the Ortons for that purpose. The double somersault and many other daring feats which were not performed

by the Ortons gave great satisfaction to the audience, on account of the time it didn't take them to do it."

Newspaper ad used by the Orton show in 1866. Circus World Museum collection.

The *Leader*, as news, reported that, "The circus of Orton Bros. on Monday last, was very fair, all things considered. The turn out in the morning was slim, but in the evening the seats were jammed with people. Many ladies being present, notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather." The above reference to a morning exhibition is unexplained, but occasionally early shows did give three performances. The advertisement mentions shows only at 2 and 7 p.m. Adults, 75 cents; children, 40 cents.

After playing Topeka, the Orton show moved on to Lawrence for a two day stand on May 28 and 29. The *Lawrence Daily Tribune* ran a story on the show on May 19, no doubt inspired by J. F. Johnson, Advertising Agent: "Fun for the Masses. See the advertisement of Orton Brothers' circus. In a few days, we shall have ground and lofty tumbling, acrobatic feats and horsemanship rarely equaled. The Ortons must go in for the rights of women, for they come with a female silver cornet band, playing the sweetest music. The whole performance is said to be good by those who have seen it, and a day spent in recreation and sport will not be lost." The story concluded by urging everyone to attend, claiming that "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."

As in other towns, the parade was composed solely of the "Female Silver Cornet Band, Consisting of ten ladies, led by their teacher, Prof. R. E. Orton. They will enter town at 10 a.m. on the day of exhibition and will discourse some of the most fashionable music extant through the principal streets."

The *Tribune*, May 30, reported: "The Orton Bros.' Circus gave two more of

THE CELEBRATED
ORTON BROTHERS'
Great American
CIRCUS

IS COMING.



The Star Company
OF AMERICA.

Newly Organized,
AND
Greatly Augmented,
FOR THE
TRAVELING SEASON OF 1866.

New Canvas, Wagons & Trappings,
EVERYTHING NEW,
Everything Complete, and in the best of running order

their entertainments yesterday, and started this morning for Olathe, where they perform this afternoon. After a tour through Iowa and Missouri, it is their intention to return to this State, and visit Southern Kansas. They gave universal satisfaction here, and were well patronized. One commendable trait of this company is that they more than fulfill all promises made concerning the entertainments. We can honestly recommend them to circus goers, wherever they may stop."

The May 23 Olathe *Mirror* carried Orton's ad and a short handout ending with, "The Company is composed of the best actors in the country, and they have given entire satisfaction wherever they have exhibited. Read their advertisement." The *Mirror* had no further comments.

Haight and Chambers' Colossal Circus and Ames' New Southern Menagerie arrived in Atchison via steamboat for the exhibitions of September 20, 1867. A one-column ad appeared September 13, in the *Daily Champion* side-by-side with an excellent two-column ad for Lake's Hippo-Olympiad. Lake was scheduled for September 23.

"Haight & Chambers' Colossal CIRCUS, and Ames' New Southern MENAGERIE. [Cut of an Elephant] Newly equipped, completed in detail, and combined for the traveling season of 1867, will give their initial Exhibitions at Atchison, on Sept. 20th. Doors open at one and seven o'clock P. M. Admission To the whole Combined Show 75 cents. Children, under ten years of age 50 cents. GRAND PROCESSION At 10 A. M. Grand Aerial ascension by Mrs. JENNIE DAYS, at 1 P. M.

"Representing a series of entertainments replete in every feature with absorbing interest and attractive novelty, and so refined,

artistic, and recherche in representation as to warrant the hearty approval of all lovers of the Truly Grand and Sublime.

"In the Equestrian, Gymnastic, Athletic and Acrobatic Deliniation, only First Class and Popular Artists [Cut of a Lion] Will participate. They whom the Management can take pleasure in presentation and the audience in witnessing their achievements, artists who have received every manifestation of approval from the most critical audiences--Among those who have passed this ordeal successfully, and will appear at each Exhibition of this mammoth consolidation, are Madame Matie McCall, Miss Nellie Day, Samuel Rhinehart, The Miaco Brothers, Mr. Wm. Naylor, Mr. H. Benarde, Sig. Henrico Tibbs, Mr. Thomas Poland, Mr. Samuel Pinds, Samuel Lathrop, (he original Kentucky Clown.) Mr. Gus Shaw, Mr. Tom Burgess, and A Troupe of Invincible Tumblers.

"The Zoological Department is unusually large and complete, and embraces many rare and beautiful specimens of Wild Beasts and Birds, from every quarter of the Globe, among which are [Cut of a Camel] Asiatic and African Lions, Tigers, Leopards, Panthers, Pumas, Kangaroos, Maskin

A page from the 1866 Haight & Chambers' courier. Pfening Archives.

4 Haight & Chambers' Colossal Circus



THE MIACOO BROTHERS,

Justly styled the Apollo Belvidere and Pollux of Athletes, graduates of the Royale Ecole des Athletes, Paris; gentlemen of the most refined manners and elegant accomplishments.



MR. WILLIAM NAYLOR,

The young American representative Bareback Hurdle Rider.

MR. THOMAS POLAND,

The scholarly Maître de Cirque, the Admirable Crichton of the American arena.

THE BARNSBY BROTHERS,

Most amusing representatives of the Reheal Gymnastique Unusique.

Swine, Ichneumans, Oselots, Tapirs, Gorillas, Apes and Monkeys, and an unprecedentedly large display of brilliant and beautiful plumaged birds, some of which are exhibited for the first time in this country, viz: The Sacred White Peacocks, from Japan !!

"A very attractive feature will be the performance of the truly beautiful little lady, SIGNORITA ELLA EUGENE, [Cut of a child standing on the head of a man riding two horses] In the Dens of the Lions and Tigers! Which she will enter at each exhibition, and by her unaccountable power reduce the savage monsters to abject and even servile submission, presenting the most astonishing instance of female intrepidity ever witnessed."

The ad ended with a cut of a clown and a sitting horse.

It is exceedingly improbable that Haight & Chambers had a gorilla. In 1867 anything uglier than Uncle Fud or Auntie Boo might be called a gorilla.

After the show had come and gone, the *Champion* reported, "Haight & Chambers' Circus and Menagerie, which exhibited here yesterday, was the best exhibition of the kind that has visited us for a long time."

James T. Johnson, this author's favorite circus man, did not exhibit in Kansas in 1867, but one of his ventures deserves our attention. The story was related by Charles Fowler in a letter of unknown date to *Billboard* magazine: "Early in November, 1867, Johnson, according to Fowler, was operating an amphitheater in Macomb, Illinois. The structure as described by Fowler was 'a building of rough boards nailed perpendicularly to a frame about the size and shape of a hundred foot route top. Inside were seats, much like those of the canvas tops, but stationary, arranged around a forty-two-foot ring. Upon one side was added a small square 'Leanto' for a dressing and property room."

"Exhibitions were given Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday with a matinee on Saturday.

"Johnson was looking for an angel to finance the building of an am-

phitheater in Burlington, Iowa, and for security, accept a mortgage on Johnson's ring stock and paraphernalia. Johnson, always a dreamer, envisioned a circuit of four amphitheaters, Quincy, Macomb and Galesburg, Illinois, and Burlington, Iowa.

"Fowler's reward for finding the necessary 'angel' was to be fifty percent of the gross amount put up by the 'angel,' with a \$50 bonus in advance and \$25 in four days, if needed for expenses."

Ad Sells had an auction house on the ground floor of a building in Burlington, and his brother Peter had a bar and billiard room on the third floor. Fowler persuaded the Sells brothers to erect the amphitheater in Burlington.

The amphitheater opened on November 23, 1867. The following handbill described the presentation: "Jas. T. Johnson's AMPHITHEATER and OPERA HOUSE, Market St., Burlington, Iowa. NOVEMBER 23, 1867, James T. Johnson, Manager; P. Sells, Treasurer."

"The Managers would respectfully announce to the public that they have erected a large and commodious Amphitheater and Opera House in this city for the purpose of giving a series of EQUESTRIAN, ACROBATIC and daz-

zling PANTHEONIC Performances and an ensemble of surpassing excellence presented by a Troupe of PICKED PERFORMERS OF THE ARENA.

This Johnson ad appeared in the July 19, 1866 *Leavenworth Daily Conservative*. Kansas State Historical Society.

"The features of this Association is replete with Artistic Excellence and Startling Novelty, presented by the following brilliant army of artists. MR. CHARLES FOWLER, Wit, Humorist and Jester who possess the rare and happy genius to 'Shoot Folly as it Flies,' without retelling or repeating the thread-bare jokes of many of the assumers of the motley garb. THE AUSTIN BROTHERS, Frank Austin, Joseph Austin, Thomas Austin and Master Bobby Austin,

in their wonderful and daring performances upon the Trapeze and Horizontal Bar, who have been hailed with delight and enthusiasm by all who have ever witnessed their feats.

"MADEMOISELLE EDITH, The Beautiful, Accomplished and Daring Equestrienne, who will appear in her finished and dazzling Scenic Riding.

"MR. DAVID GILLAM, The very popular Trick Clown in his repertoire of mirth provoking specialties.

"MR. JOSEPH KEYS, In his intricate and skillful performance of the Two, Four and Six Horse Acts of Horsemanship. Mr. Johnson will introduce his challenge Trick Horse FRANKLIN, whose wonderful and sagacious performances have been universally applauded. A Superb Cornet & String Band, Will impart the Musical Finish to this Celebrated Circus. The performances will be conducted in such a manner that the most moral and fastidious may witness without fear or irritation. Admission 50 cts. Children under 12 years of age, 25 cts. Door open at 6 1/2 o'clock, performance to commence at 7 1/2."

The amphitheater folded in March, due, according to Fowler, to the poor management of Johnson. The outfit returned to Macomb and Fowler with it as a secret agent of the Sells brothers. On the second night in Macomb, Fowler overheard Johnson and his brother Harvey plotting to run off with the pad and trick horses. Fowler telegraphed the Sells brothers who seized all of the stock and equipment covered by the mortgage.

With Johnson's lost properties the Sells brothers entered the circus world. Fowler recounted that he didn't think success with Johnson's equipment was possible, "for anything he ever handled was a hoodoo." Ad Sells replied, "I never had any luck until I got rid of every bit of it."

Johnson had the most consistent luck of any American circus man. Always bad.

1868

Orton Brothers' Circus returned to Kansas in 1868. Since their visit of the year before, the Ortons claimed to have greatly augmented their show "at enormous expense, for the traveling campaign of 1868, with NEW CANVAS, NEW WAGONS AND NEW EQUIPAGE, on a scale of magnificence hitherto unknown in the circus line." Their advertisement in the *Kansas Daily Tribune*, Lawrence, April 17, proclaimed: "THE CAMELS ARE COMING. Six Gigantic Camels have been lately attached to Orton

JAS. T. JOHNSON & CO'S

GREAT MAMMOTH

CIRCUS



BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

James T. Johnson.....Business Manager.
Joseph Tiekham.....Equestrian Manager.
M. Van Vleck.....Treasurer.
Geo. Cramer.....Master of the Ring.

THE MAMMOTH CIRCUS

Is Coming!

And will exhibit in

Leavenworth City,

July 23d and 24th.

TWO GREAT SHOWS IN ONE!

THIS grand consolidation, comprising the company of James T. Johnson's Circus, and the Mammoth Show of Castello & Vleck, under the style and name of James T. Johnson & Co., have connected with them the largest troupe of Equestrian, Gymnastic, Acrobatic and Athletic talent ever before consolidated in one company, either in Europe or America, consisting of

Bros' Circus, and will be exhibited without extra charge." Another splendid feature advertised was the FEMALE SILVER CORNET BAND, consisting of Ten Ladies, led by MISS IRENE ORTON," which, "Will enter town at 10 o'clock a. m., and will discourse some of the most fashionable music extant, through the principal streets, in their Beautiful Chariot, drawn by twelve splendid Dapple Gray Horses."

Hiram Orton patriarch of the famous Orton clan. Circus World Museum collection.

J. Harvey, Orton's agent, booked Lawrence for two days, April 23 and 24. Also appearing in Lawrence April 23 and 24, was the Peak Family of bell ringers who, it was claimed, would "ring sweet music from their ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY BELLS. While Orton's Female Silver Cornet Band was circulating through the principal streets discoursing some of the most fashionable music extant, the cornet band of the Peaks was also touring the city. The size of the hall in which the Peak family performed is unknown, but the *Tribune* reported the family played to full houses.

Reporting on the events of April 23, the *Tribune* stated: "The advent of the Bell Ringers and Orton's circus yesterday, caused some little stir in the city, but failed to draw many persons from the country. The cornet band of the Peaks and female band of the Ortons paraded the streets in the afternoon, followed by a long procession of juveniles of some ten or twelve different shades of color, who seemed to regard it as being altogether the biggest day of the season, but otherwise there was no particular excitement. On the circus we found a very mild crowd of about two hundred persons, enjoying the eloquence of the gentleman who expatiated on the wonders contained in the side-show, where could be seen the Japanese pig, the baby camel, the little girl that walks the wire and beats the drum, and the double-headed calf; walk right in; first, last and only

chance, for the small sum of twenty five cents.' &c; but the number that took his word for it, without going in seemed to be rather the largest. Money seems to be rather too scarce, just at present, among show-goers, to allow of much expenditure in search of amusement."

The *Tribune* also reported that in an unnamed Texas town the night performance was interrupted by 14 mounted guerillas who rode into the ring firing revolvers intent on robbing the patrons. A group of soldiers resounded killing or wounding nine of the invaders. "The proprietors of the circus, in view of the liability of the frequent recurrence of such erratic freaks in the South, express preference for a Northern route, where free and easy ways are not so much in vogue."

Fact and fantasy were thoroughly intertwined in the newspapers of the day.

The *Tribune* ran a final report on the show on the 25th: "Friday was most inclement, drizzling rain all day until a more disagreeable, wet, muddy evening could scarcely have been imagined, and no ordinary entertainment could have got a house at all."

From Lawrence the Orton Bros. Circus moved to Topeka for exhibitions on April 25. The program was still much of a family affair, but in 1868 it was embellished by eight "Lady Equestriennes."

The *Register of Licenses Issued*, City of Topeka, 1870-82, shows that license #181 was issued June 28, 1870, to M. O'Connoer & Co's circus, sideshow and swing for exhibitions on July 9, 1870. The fee was \$35.

"The streets were crowded yesterday," according to the *Kansas Daily Commonwealth*, Topeka, "and presented a busy, bustling, appearance. The cause of it was mainly attributed to the fact that a circus was in town and black and white and red mingled harmoniously together as they moved along to the wonderful pavilion to witness the usual amount of 'horse performance' and hear the usual number of funny 'gags' got off by the clown."

In another paragraph the *Com-*

monwealth reported that, "A scene occurred at the circus last evening between the proprietor and the treasurer, in which pistols (but no blood) were drawn. The treasurer was discharged and in retaliation declares that he will 'bust the concern.'"

The Topeka papers provided no clue as to the cause of the dispute.

The *Neosho Valley Register*, Iola, reported that O'Connor's show had 100 men and 110 horses. "The show, M. O'Connor's Great Western Circus," according to the *Register* on the day following the exhibitions of July 16, "has come and gone. A great many people were in the city, and the tent was crowded to its utmost, both afternoon and evening. We must admit surprise as to the character of the circus. It was better than we dared to anticipate--much better than the generality of shows traveling in a western country. The performance was all good--no vulgarity, obscenity, or outrageous display of female nakedness--and of a character that could not offend the most fastidious. The clown Mr. Charles Lee Fowler, was in his happiest mood, and full of original humor and local bits. His jokes were good and laughable without being shallow and simple. The entire company were gentlemanly and well behaved, and the people were well satisfied with the day's recreation."

O'Connor exhibited at Erie on July 19, and then moved on to Osage Mission [Present day St. Paul] for performances on July 20. The following handout appeared in the July 14 *Osage Mission Journal*: "O'Connor's Great Western Circus.

"The above gigantic circus company will pitch their tent in Osage Mission, on Wednesday next, July 20th, and give two entertainments--one in the afternoon and one in the evening.

"The press throughout the State speak in the highest terms of the mammoth (sic) show. The company is made up of the very best talent in the line. We give below a few of the prominent artists now traveling with this popular establishment:

"La Petite Minnie, 'The Fairy Queen of the American Arena,' is at the head of her profession, and will appear at each exhibition.

"Adolph Gonzales, the Chilian Acrobat, who throws 100 consecutive somersaults.

"R. W. Beswick, the champion leaper, tumbler and vaulter.

"Austin Bros., celebrated Trapeze performers. They have no equal in this hemisphere.

"C. Lee Fowler, the American Jester

and Comic Singer. He is the most original clown now traveling, and is a sure cure for the 'blues.' Let everybody go and hear him and enjoy a good laugh.

"Ed. Schofield, Geo. North, J. S. Keys, Masters Harry and Fred and a host of other first class performers appear in each exhibition, beside trick mules and educated ponies."

The last known date for O'Connor in Kansas is July 23, at Chetopa.

Orton Brothers' Circus performed in Topeka on April 28, 1870. The coming was a well-kept secret, for none of the Topeka papers mentioned the show until it had gone. The *Kansas Daily Commonwealth*, Topeka, reported that, "Orton's circus performed in Topeka yesterday. A fight occurred at the circus last night, between a beneficiary of the fifteenth amendment and one of the show men. We didn't learn the cause of the difficulty, and as nothing serious resulted we didn't stop to inquire."

City License #155 was issued April 23, 1870, to Orton Brothers for exhibitions April 28. Fee \$26.

James T. Johnson, whose dilapidated circus played Junction City in 1866, returned to Kansas in 1870 with his United Circus and Performing Animals. An advertisement in the July 15 *Workingman's Journal*, Columbus, told the facts as Johnson saw them.

"James T. Johnson & Co's UNITED CIRCUS and Performing Animals, are coming, with their Great Consolidated Shows Organized for the Season of 1870. Will Exhibit for One Day Only at COLUMBUS July 21 '70. 2 Circuses & Performing Animals All Combined Together in One Great Show. Over 200 Men, Horses and Ponies--Costing over \$200,000, Giving the best and most variety of Performances ever put before the public. Also the large MAMMOTH PAVILION, capable of seating five thousand people with comfort and ease. Introducing more TRAINED WILD ANIMALS Of different species, in the Ring, than ever was witnessed by the Public in former days. Also more Trained and Imported THOROUGH BRED HORSES, PONIES and MULES, which will be introduced by the Master Showman, MR. JAS. T. JOHNSON, who will make his appearance in the Ring, at each and every performance. Also the full force of both Circuses will be brought forth into the Ring, introducing some of the Best Gymnast Performers In The World, Such as the Double Flying Trapeze, Leaping and Tumbling, Horizontal Bars, Double somersaulting &c., &c. In connection with this Mam-

moth Company will be found M'LE BLANCH LEOPOLD, The champion Lady Gymnast of the world, in conjunction with G. LEOPOLD, The champion of England, will appear at every performance in their Challenge Acts.

"THIS IS THE LARGEST AND BEST SHOW ON THE ROAD.

"Remember! That This Is Two Circuses and performing Animals. All Combined Together, giving one of the Best Ring Performances ever witnessed and the best satisfaction of any Show traveling, being 35 performers in the Ring. Beware of Little Humbug Circuses, which are now traveling. Remember. Wait and look out for Jas. T. Johnson & Co's Three Consolidated Shows. Don't fail to see the Grand Procession, one half mile long. One of the great features in this Procession, is the Little Tom Thumb Chariot, drawn by six imported Coach Dogs, and driven by a Funny Old clown. The features of the Model Establishment are the Greatest Riders and most Daring Gymnasts! Most Renowned Acrobats! Best General Performers! Most famous Vaulters! Best trained Horses! Most astonishing Mules! Trained Dogs! Trained Wild Animals! &c, &c., Admission 75 cts children under 12 years 50 cts. Doors open at 2 and 7 P. M. C. W. KIDDER, Agent."

After circus day the *Journal* made no mention of Johnson.

The *Girard Weekly Press*, following the exhibitions of July 22, stated that, "The circus on Friday brought many of our country friends to town; nor were they disappointed in their expectations of what the performance would be. People, in town and country, will attend these performances no matter if the name does carry with it something of the vulgar."

Johnson has been reported as having played Osage Mission, Humboldt, Chetopa and Baxter Springs, but the local papers in all of the towns make no mention, good or bad, of Johnson's show.

The United Circus, reportedly, was attached by the employees, August 27, and sold at auction in Little Rock, Arkansas, August 31.

Johnson's luck never deserted him.

Other shows of the era playing Kansas are covered in *Bandwagon*, May-June, 1987, and are listed below:

1856 Washburn's Great American Colossal Circus

1857 Herr Driesbach & Co's Menagerie & Circus

1857 Sands, Nathan & Co

1858 Spalding & Rogers' New Orleans Circus

1858 Levi J. North's National Circus

1859 Mabie's Newly Organized Double Troupe of Menagerie & Circus

1859 Davis & Crosbie's Great French & American Circus

1865 Yankee Robinson's Great Consolidations

1865 Dan Castello's Great Show, Moral Exhibition & Wonderful Wild Animals

1865 James T. Johnson & Co's Mammoth Circus

1867 Orton Bros.' Great American Circus

1867 Yankee Robinson's Consolidated Shows

1867 Lake's Hippo-Olympiad & Mammoth Circus

1868 Dan Castello's Monster Show Comprising Nixon's New York Circus, Howe's U. S. Circus & Castello's Trained Animals

1868 Orton Bros.' Circus

1868 Maginley & Carroll's Great Legitimate Circus

1868 J. M. French's Great Oriental Circus & Egyptian Caravan Combined with a Troupe of Iroquois Indians

1869 Dan Castello's Great Show, Circus, Menagerie & Abyssian Caravan

1869 G. F. Bailey & Co's Gigantic Caravan, Menagerie & Equestrian Combination

From *Bandwagon*, July-August, 1987:

1869 G. F. Bailey & Co's Gigantic Caravan, Menagerie & Equestrian Combination (Continuation)

1869 Dan Rice's Own Circus

1870 James Robinson's Great Circus & Animal Show

1870 John Stowe's Western World Circus (aka Stowe & Orton)

1870 O'Connor's Great Western Circus

1870 Hemmings, Cooper & Whitby's Great Allied Exhibition of Menagerie & Circus

1870 Macart Sisters' Great Parisian Circus

1871 Van Amburgh & Co's Mammoth Menagerie, Seagrist's Great French Circus & Frost's American Circus

1871 Old John Robinson

1871 Lake's Hippo-Olympiad

1872 Dan Rice's Paris Pavilion Circus

1872 James Robinson's Great Circus, Museum & Animal Show

1872 Older's Museum, Circus & Menagerie

1872 Lent's New York Circus

1872 P. T. Barnum's Great Traveling World's Fair

Research funded in part by grants from Wolfe's Camera & Video Inc. Topeka, Kansas



Mike Martin's Circus Hobby Hall



"THE CIRCUS COMES HOME" by Lois Duncan

Here's a super book, loaded from cover to cover, with photos shot mostly at Sarasota Winterquarters in the 40's and 50's.

The author's father, LIFE photographer Joe Steinmetz, caught rare glimpses of "BIG BERTHA" from the vantage point of a trusted insider.

From Felix Adler to the Flying Wallendas, you'll see 'em all in rare backyard photos. Plus scenes on the train, during rehearsals and on the road. The animal trainers, sideshow acts, clowns and aerial stars they're all pictured!

This hard cover gem will instantly become one of your favorites and deserving of a spot in every fan and performers library!

MINT COPIES - LIMITED SUPPLY - \$16.50 POSTPAID

Circus Publicity Photos 8 x 10 B&W. Any five for \$11.50 Postpaid

Side Show Acts:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. PERCILLA "THE MONKEY GIRL" | 6. FREIDA PUSHNIK - HALF LADY |
| 2. DOLL FAMILY - PERFORMING MIDGETS | 7. THE FISHERS - GIANT COUPLE |
| 3. LEATHA SMITH - SWORD SWALLOWER | 8. BABY THELMA - FAT LADY |
| 4. SENORITA JOSEPHINE - SNAKE HANDLER | 9. HILTON SISTERS - SIAMESE TWINS |
| 5. ANDY BRISKEY - FIRE EATER | 10. BETTY BROADBENT - TATTOOED |



Capricious Clowns:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. FELIX ADLER | 6. BLINKO BURCH |
| 2. PAUL JUNG | 7. PAUL JEROME |
| 3. OTTO GREIBLING | 8. HARRY DANN |
| 4. EMMETT KELLY | 9. CHUCK BURNES |
| 5. LOU JACOBS | 10. ALBERT WHITE |

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